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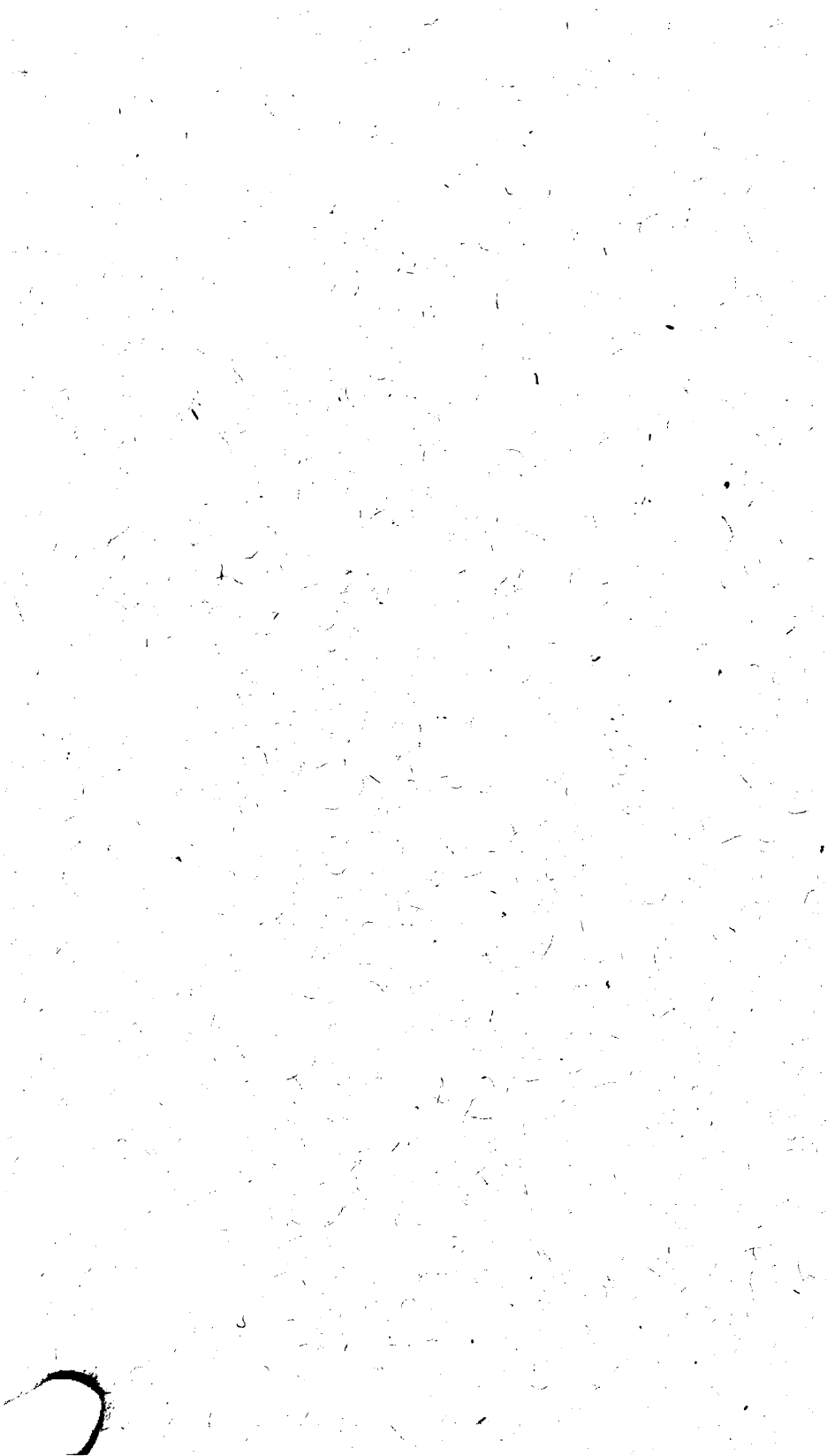
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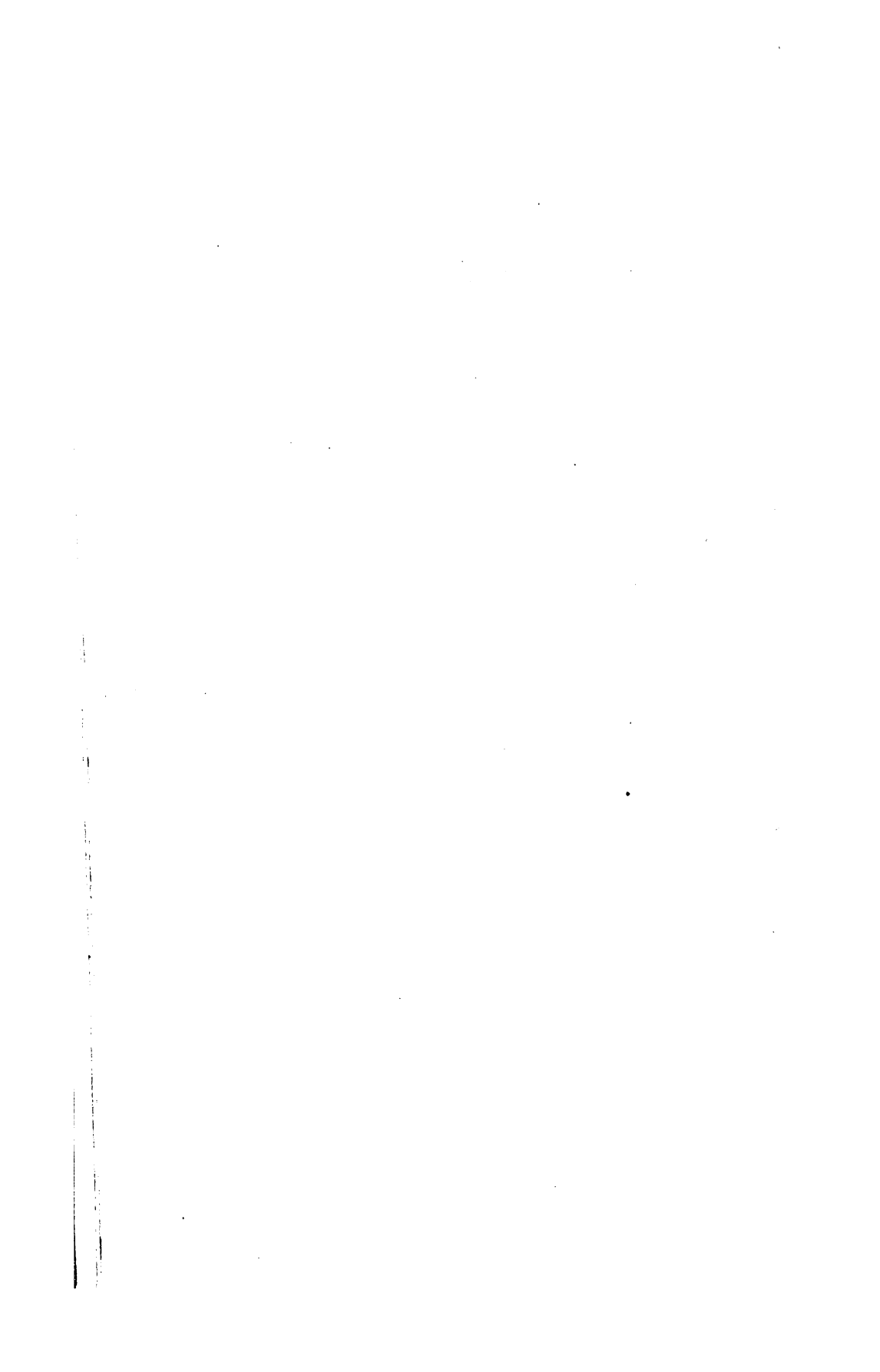
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GWENDOLINE'S HARVEST.

B
A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

... The J. Payne
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"A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK," &c.

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FRANKLIN SQUARE.

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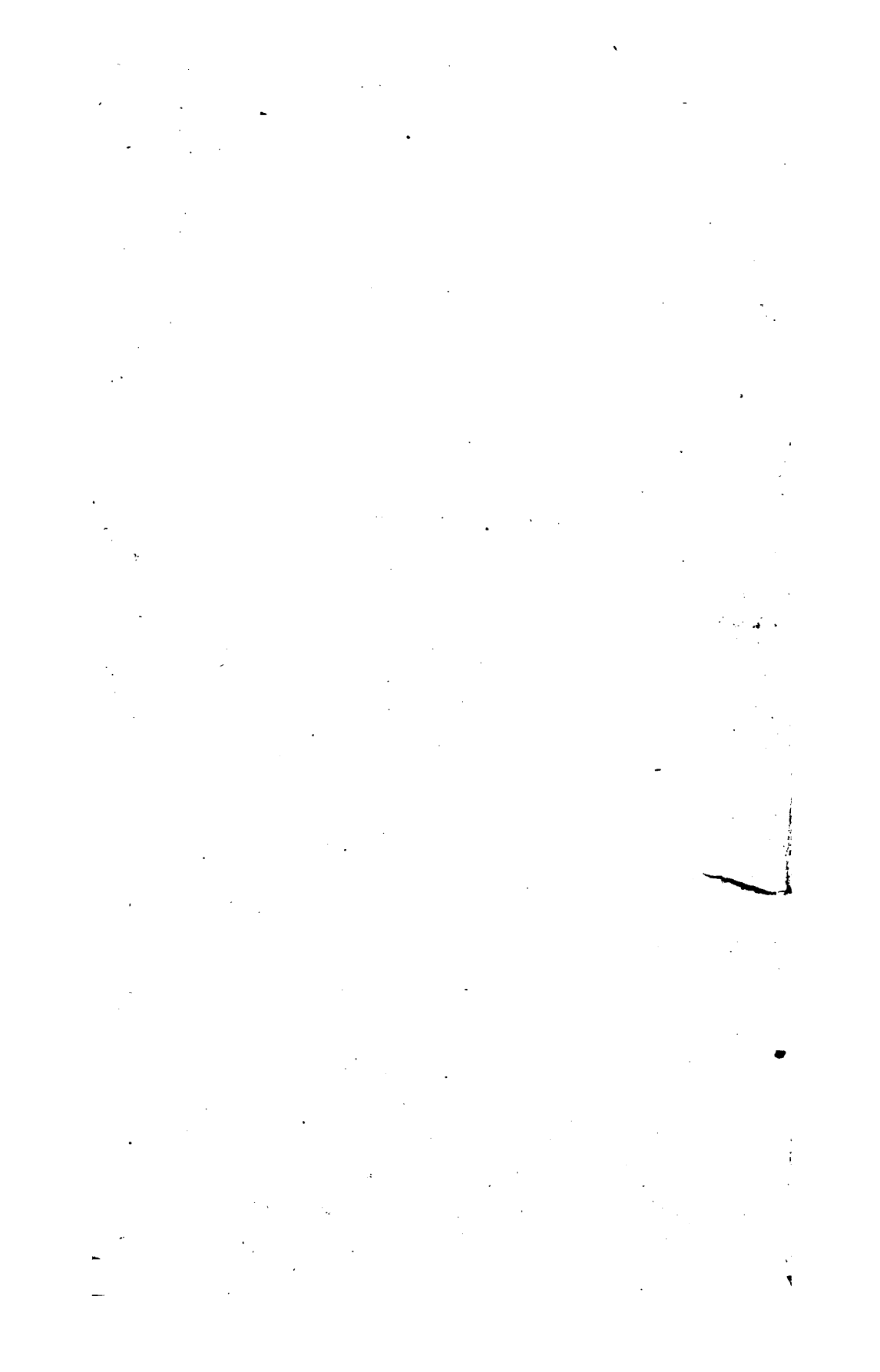
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GWENDOLINE'S HARVEST.

THE SOWING.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE RIVER TERRACE.

On the left bank of a certain river in West Cornwall stood, a quarter of a century ago, an ancient residence, entitled for the most part by admiring tourists Belvidere Court, but more properly designated Bedivere. It was very old, and, for all that is known to the contrary, may have existed in some shape or other in King Arthur's days, and been the country seat of Sir Bedivere himself, "the last of all his knights;" though his stronghold it could scarcely have been, by reason of its position. A wide bend of the river, which was navigable for small boats to the sea, afforded on its southern shore the space upon which the edifice was built; and it was commanded of course by the opposite bank, as well as by that which—now a wall of autumn foliage—towered steeply up behind it. The mansion, which was built of stone, four square, and with a court-yard within, although an imposing and stately edifice, exhibited traces not only of decay, but of neglect. Time, that at last must needs eat into the heart of stone itself, can be bought off for a space like any other barbarian; but small attempt had been here made to come to terms with him. The grass in the court-yard was growing up among the cracked stones; the vast oak staircases needed the carpenter almost as much as the polisher; the wood-work of the huge windows was rotten and worm-eaten, and even the panes in some of the disused rooms were missing, having been broken—that is, they had been removed altogether, to avoid the unsightliness the spectacle would otherwise have afforded.

From the river, however, Bedivere Court looked every inch a palace, and you would never have guessed that it was the home of poverty. The furniture of the reception-rooms was massive and striking, if its splendor was somewhat faded; and the thick pile of its immense carpets had in places grown thin and bare. The three drawing-rooms, *en suite*, had gilt and ormolu enough to furnish forth an acre of first floor in Mayfair or Belgravia; but in the daylight they showed dull and lustreless, and the wax candles which would have been necessary to light them up, would have consumed a week's income of their present proprietor. Sir Guy Treherne had been accustomed all his life to burn his candles at both ends, and the same fashion had held with his ancestors before him. In Sir Guy's own sitting-room—a very snug one, and in which no article of modern luxury was wanting—hung a picture of his great-

grandfather, Sir Ralph, illustrative enough of this family peculiarity. It represented a man of middle age, attired in old velvet and tarnished lace, playing at cards by himself, with a mug of ale before him. The legend ran that this noble gentleman had gambled so freely, and with such continuous ill luck, that he could at last find no man so poor as to contend with him, and was driven to play Put, the right hand against the left, for pots of beer. The game had this advantage, that whichever won, Sir Ralph always emptied the mug; but it was a sad falling off from the days when he could stake mine and moor upon one turn of a card or one throw of the dice; and eventually, tired of this solitary sport, he had been compelled to marry an heiress.

On the floor above, the best furnished sleeping-room—and, indeed, it had nothing to be desired which the London upholsterer could supply—was again Sir Guy's; and if you had only looked at those two chambers, you would have said that the interior of Bedivere Court was in all respects in keeping with the stately character of its external appearance—as seen, that is, from the point of view we have already indicated. The rare "excursion" parties—which, in those pre-railway days, came in pleasure-boats up the river—would tarry opposite the "Court," and express their innocent wishes that they were only half as rich as the possessor of that imposing structure; but if their desire could have been gratified, it would probably have proved even more disappointing than fulfilled desires usually are. It was only strangers from a distance who could have been under such a misapprehension at all. Not a boatman at St. Medards-on-Sea, which was the nearest town; not a cottager on the wide moorland that stretched to southward, almost to the Land's End itself; not an underground worker in those western mines, that had long passed from the lavish hands of the Trehermes, but knew that Sir Guy was almost as poor as themselves, notwithstanding he still lived at Bedivere Court, and that his daughter, Miss Gwendoline, was the acknowledged beauty of the county. And not only, it might have been added, of the county, but even of the London season. That very summer, Gwendoline Treherne had made a *succès* which had filled many a Belgravian matron with jealous bitterness. She had come, and been seen, and conquered at seventeen, the previous year; and they had hoped she would have gained her end, and left the field free for others perhaps not less favored by nature than herself, although they might have lacked that imperial grace of which they did not deny her the possession.

Fashion, more honest (because more audacious) than mere Gentility, allows some merits even in a rival, and it was confessed on all hands that a more magnificent creature had never courted at St. James's than Gwendoline Treherne. Those were not the days of chignons, and the genuineness of those masses of bright brown hair, that fell on either side of her broad white brow, and would have rippled to her heels but for the pearls that held them, was never called in question. Her complexion, although exquisitely fair, was almost colorless; and it was urged that those splendid eyes gazed, from under their long black lashes, with too little interest upon the whirl and glitter of the world, for one so new to it; that those fine features, faultless as they were in form, somewhat lacked expression. None could doubt that she had wit, but that again, it was said, was of too mature a sort: too mocking and too worldly even for the idle jesting through amid whom her lot was cast. She sang, she played, and in none of those accomplishments which Fashion has imposed on those who aspire to be her favorites, acquitted herself otherwise than well; but in these she failed to captivate, because it was plain to all that she herself took no pleasure in them. It was also hinted, by persons of judgment of her own sex, that in a few years Gwendoline Treherne would grow "horribly coarse"—contract too much of what is scientifically termed adipose deposit; and, indeed, in this Hebe of eighteen, there was something—though it was as much owing to her mature manner as to her rounded charms—that reminded one also of Juno. The fact was, her form was one of those which Nature only now and then permits herself to build, lest it should discredit the rest of her human handiwork. Graceful in youth—graceful in womanhood—graceful, or possessing something closely akin to grace, in age itself; strong, yet supple; delicate, yet enduring; and which, having suffered, shows no trace of Sorrow's plowshare even until the end. Even at eighteen, Gwendoline had had experiences which would have marred the beauty of some girls for life, but there is not a line on that white brow to tell of them, nor one reflex of regret even in the most secret depths of those grand eyes.

Mark her now as she stands alone in the late but sultry autumn evening, with one hand on the balustrade of the terrace, and her queenly head turned slightly to one side, to catch an expected sound—the beat of oars upon the river. So motionless, she might have been a statue, save for the quick rise and fall of the fair bosom, which seems to resent the restraint even of its scant muslin prison. She is attired, though the materials of her dress are simple enough, in the height (or rather lowness) of the prevailing fashion; her noble head has no covering save that which bountiful Nature has bestowed upon it, and her round white arms are bare. If she had had a mother, or indeed any prudent person whatever to look after her, she would surely at that late hour have worn at least a shawl; but she is a stranger, and has ever been so, to the veriest commonplaces of affection and domestic care; nor is there one of that scanty household, including simple Fanny, her own maid, who dare interfere even in her own behalf with Miss Gwendoline's caprices.

The expected oar-stroke is heard at last, dull

in the distance, and silver-sharp as it draws nigh, and a light skiff shoots up to the terrace stairs. At the first sound she withdraws into the square stone chamber—which, half arbor, half greenhouse, stands at the extremity of the river-frontage—and there awaits the oarsman; it is not the first time that he has found her there, for it is her accepted lover, Piers Mostyn.

"You are late to-night, dear Piers," says she, in a tone that certainly lacks no tenderness of expression; "and yet I told you papa would be away by six o'clock—"

"And not return until to-morrow," added he, embracing her; "that will give us the whole morning together, Gwendoline."

That this handsome young fellow, with the short curly hair and blonde mustache, that contrast so strongly with cheeks bronzed by the Southern sun, was in love with her was evident enough, and yet he called her by no pet name, such as love delights in. She was Gwendoline to him, as to her father and to all the world.

"No, Piers; you will not see me to-morrow, nor at all again for many a long day," returned she, calmly; "so you must make the most of me while you can."

He kissed her fondly, as he well might do on such an invitation, and, running his fingers through her ample tresses, sighed, somewhat wearily: "What new enigma is this, my darling? You have always something in that scheming brain of yours to trouble me with. I sometimes wish that you were a little more like other girls."

"Like your cousin Mande may be for instance?" answered she, quickly, and over her pale face there came a sudden glow of scarlet.

"Now don't be foolish, dear. How can you be so jealous of a shadow? for she is but a shadow compared with you, my empress! I only meant that when I would have you all love and tenderness you so often chill me with the recollection of our penniless condition, and the obstacles that intervene between us and happiness."

"It is better so, Piers; we must look difficulties in the face if we would overcome them."

"Well, I look at them, but they get no smaller for that," answered the young man, with a touch of petulance. "It is only when I look at you that I forget them."

"My darling Piers!"

To one who saw her, heard her now, it would have seemed ridiculous enough that any one should have ever said that Gwendoline's voice was wanting in flexibility, her features in expression, her eyes in passionate tenderness. For a brief space she seemed as ready as her lover himself to forget, in their mutual caresses, the gulf so difficult to be bridged by marriage between the penniless daughter of Sir Guy and the worse than penniless Piers Mostyn, the younger brother of a childless but still youthful lord, and whose slender patrimony was already exceeded by his debts. She was, however, the first to recall this stubborn fact to her remembrance—and to his.

"Dear Piers," said she, "if you really love me as you profess to do, you must listen seriously to what I have to say, and abide by it. I have had a long talk with papa to-day. He has placed my future position before me quite unreservedly."

"I can easily believe it, Gwendoline," returned

the other, with a bitter smile; "Sir Guy can be a very plain speaker when he chooses. I have had experience of that myself."

"Nevertheless, since he has only stated what is the fact, it is worth our best attention, Piers;" and she touched his somewhat effeminate cheek with her white hand, and pushed him gently from her. "You must learn to live away from me, my own."

"Let me have these to comfort me," said he, snatching her fingers, and covering them with kisses; "then, when you come to speak of parting, it will seem less bitter."

CHAPTER II.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

"You have said papa can speak plainly, Piers, and you are right; moreover, he never loses his temper. He called me into his room to-day, and referred to my having met you here the other evening—who could have told him I can not guess, but he has found it out—as coolly as though you had been your brother, Lord Luttrell."

"Who, had he been a bachelor, would scarcely have suited Sir Guy better," observed Piers, parenthetically. "The estate is dipped deeper than I had thought, and if he were to die childless to-morrow I should still be but a poor man."

"Then even that chance may be put out of the question," observed Gwendoline, significantly; "and there is all the more reason for your laying to heart what I have now to say. You called me just now your empress: Piers, I am obliged to you for the compliment, but, as you don't happen to be King Cophetua, I am not likely, so far as you are concerned, to be other than I am—a beggar-maid." Yes, Piers; not merely a girl with an inadequate portion, you must understand, but an absolutely penniless one. Even that tumble-down house yonder is only my home so long as papa lives, nor has he one single shilling to leave behind him."

"Nay, Gwendoline; I know that you will be poor enough, but your father has surely exaggerated the case; it is impossible—"

"Nothing is impossible, Piers," interrupted she, gravely, "when a man has sunk the remnant of his fortune in a life-annuity."

"What! with a daughter absolutely dependent upon him? Do you mean to tell me that Sir Guy—"

"Nay, do not let us discuss the selfishness of man, Piers, because it is an extensive subject, and the night is late," observed Gwendoline, with cynical calm. "Let us rather take matters as they are, and make the best of them. Papa's notion is—if his morality has any interest for you—that he has invested a considerable sum in my education, in my wardrobe, and in my *début* in London last year, and that I must live upon what profit I can get out of them, and look for nothing more from him. He is so good as to say that I have very considerable attractions of my own, which, in combination with what he has done for me, ought, it seems, to make my future position quite secure. He informed me that men will bid higher for beauty than for aught else in the world; and that, in my case, it

would be a great imprudence not to close at once with the highest bidder."

"And what did you say, Gwendoline?" inquired her lover, gazing on her with passion, yet in wonderment—wrapped in a sort of charmed awe.

"He did not give me time to speak, Piers; but turning to the picture of our ancestor, Sir Ralph, he said: 'The Trehermes have never been so poor as now save once, my dear, which was in this gentleman's time; who, as you see, had to take to beer, and backing his right hand against his left at cards; yet he contrived to marry an heiress, and thereby kept Bedivere Court in the family for a hundred and fifty years after him. Now, what that middle-aged profligate, in tattered clothes yonder, could manage to effect, lies easily enough, I fancy, within the reach of my daughter, Gwendoline.' Nor, indeed, could I deny that papa spoke truth in that, Piers."

Self-conscious of the power of the beauty of which she spoke, she drew herself up to her full height, and her dark eyes flashed around her as though with the triumph they foresaw.

"But did you not tell him that you had promised yourself to me?" inquired her lover, not without some touch of dignity.

"I did not—because I saw he knew it already, Piers. Papa knows every thing that can in any way affect himself, be sure of that. He knows what is good for us, since it also happens to be what is good for him. He did not use a single menace, nor even bid me never see you again. It is like enough he understood you would be here to-night. He simply placed my position and yours before me, on the social map, just like a lesson in geography. 'If you choose to marry this pleasant young sprig of nobility,' said he, 'you can, of course, do so. I will not even refuse my blessing, but I doubt whether you can live on that, or even pay his debts with it.'"

"Gad, he is right there," observed the Honorable Piers Mostyn, ruefully.

"Of course he is right, Piers, or I would not have troubled you with these notes of his conversation. I love you, my darling; ah! how I love you, but as for our marriage—"

"Gwendoline, dearest Gwendoline," whispered the young man passionately, and passing his arm around her waist, "let the world take its own way without us; for your sake I can be content to live on a crust! Fly with me—to-night—to-morrow! You shall stay with my old tutor and his wife until I can get the license. Nobody shall stop us; nothing shall turn me from you; you have only to say, 'I will.'"

For an instant—for a single instant—Gwendoline was silent: charmed with the glowing picture thus presented to her, her white cheek grew whiter, sicklied o'er by the pale hue of passion; she closed her eyes, as though to hide from herself that comely appealing face she so often saw, even in her dreams, but never so lover-like and fond as now; but the next moment she was herself again. "No, Piers. We can neither of us afford this folly; or, at least," added she, staying the vehement protestation upon the threshold of his lips with no trembling finger, "I for my part can not afford it. For argument's sake—or rather to avoid argument—let it be granted that you could undergo the sacrifice

—that you, accustomed to luxury from your cradle, to extravagance and self-indulgence from your boyhood, could, for my sake, live, as you say, upon a crust; but for me, I am less simple in my tastes—

'Love in a hut with water and a crust,
Is, Lord forgive us! cinders, ashes, dust.'

Even a poet has the good sense to see that, Piers; and I am not a poet, nor would be one even if I could. I, too, have been brought up, if not in luxury, still without lack of comforts, refinements, and, of late years, I have tasted of the golden water of life, the elixir of rank and wealth—a Circe cup, as some call it—but which is to me, I confess, most sweet and delectable; nay, what is more, Piers, wealth, or what wealth can buy, has become indispensable to my happiness. Look at me—you who called me empress but a while ago, and ask yourself the question—could this girl live a life of poverty? No, Piers; not even for your sake. If that love for you, which I have acknowledged with no niggard tongue, is to be lasting, it must be put to no such test. In your heart of hearts you will soon confess that I have spoken for both of us—you will thank me for not having permitted you to indulge a generous but reckless impulse; but I am content to bear the present blame myself; to let the imputation of worldliness and selfish caution rest upon my own shoulders. You can call me calculating, but you can scarcely call me cold, my darling."

He had unclasped his arm from around her waist, and over his finely chiseled features there had stolen while she spoke the same look of curiosity, almost of suspicion, that was already seen there once before—a look that seemed to say, "This girl is not like other girls; I can not fathom her;" but her last loving words evoked his smile again—and he had a very winning smile.

"No, Gwendoline; you are not cold," said he, fondly; "it would be kinder to me if you were, since your view of our future is so unhopeful."

"Do not despise me for my loving candor," exclaimed the young girl suddenly; "to tell you how I love you is the only luxury which is at present within my power, and now I have done with even that. You must leave St. Medards to-morrow, Piers. You must go home, or, at least, far from this place."

"Why so, my darling? Matters can be no worse than they are now. Your father understands our mutual position, and has confidence—not ill founded, as it seems—in his daughter's prudence. I have been only here four days, and seen you but thrice."

"Nevertheless, Piers, you must do as I say, if you really wish to be one day able to call me yours."

"But how can my absence possibly promote that end, Gwendoline?"

"Do not ask me, darling; do not press me, I conjure you. Strive to believe, rather, that the sight of you, the knowledge of your nearness to me, would be more than I have strength to bear. Or, if not so, credit me, Piers, when I tell you that your absence *will* promote that end, will bring us—slowly but surely—more near to one another; will make me—it must, it shall, your wife at last!"

"And, in the mean time, Gwendoline, is it possible I read you aright for once? Some other man is to be your husband."

"Yes, Piers."

A long silence fell between them; nothing was heard but the swift flow of the river, and the murmur of the fir-tree tops upon the crest of the opposite bank. Upon these, as they gently swayed in the moonlit air, they both fixed their eyes, not looking upon one another.

"And is this to be a one-sided arrangement?" inquired the young man presently, with a bitter laugh; "or am I, too, to be free to wed?"

"Free, do you call it!" exclaimed Gwendoline, haughtily. "Is it you, then, who have to make the sacrifice? Papa, indeed, must have spoken truth when he said men were all alike—harsh, selfish—"

"Dear Gwendoline, I ask pardon. It is you, of course, who will have to suffer. I do see that. But the proposition so took me by surprise, I scarce knew what I said."

"Nay, you were right to speak your thought, Piers. It is necessary that we should thoroughly understand one another. If you promise to remain single, I, on the other hand, will not impose unreasonable terms upon you. You have been told, like me, that your best chance in life—your only prospect, indeed, it is like enough—is to make a wealthy marriage. Well, so be it. I have a definite plan, a plan that will succeed, I feel; but if it fail—and it *may* fail—I will release you at once from your engagement. Or, if your debts should so accumulate—although I trust to help you *there*, Piers—as to necessities—But no; I can not bear to think of that, my darling; you will wait for me. You will be patient, for the sake of your poor, wretched Gwendoline. For I *shall* be wretched—ah! as you men can never guess, until the time comes—until we shall be both repaid for all. You are not hating me, darling, are you? not despising me for casting away all hope of happiness for years, for your dear sake?"

"Nay, Gwendoline; I am all admiration: if your scheme seemed strange at first, it is, I perceive, the only one that is left to us. And yet I am lost in wonder that you should have hit upon it. I have always found women, even the wise ones, so impracticable and full of sentiment. Now, you have no nonsense about your of that sort."

"He does despise me," thought Gwendoline, with a shudder. "He would have loved me better had I been a fool, like other girls." But she smiled upon him fondly as she answered: "I am acting for the best, my darling, and must fit myself for the part I have to play as well as I can. It is only the knowledge of your love that will support me through it. I possess it—do I not, Piers? Yes, you say so, and I believe you; but you can never love me as I love you."

Again he pressed her to his breast with passionate warmth, and she felt that he was hers once more; the risk she had run of losing him altogether had been greater than she had expected, but it was over now. The dangerous subject had been entered upon; she had skated over the thin ice, and was safe; but it was better not to venture near that perilous spot again.

"You must leave me now, darling," said she, "or that little fool of a waiting-maid of mine

will be coming out to look for me. I will keep you well advised of all that happens, but we must not meet again at present. Remember, I am yours, and yours only, forever! How I long for that dear day when you shall have the right to call me so! Farewell—nay, not another kiss, Piers—my own dear love, farewell.”

He leaped lightly into the skiff, and keeping it under the shadow of the terrace, and out of sight of the house, rowed rapidly away. Gwendoline watched him to the corner of the river-bend with hungry eyes, then sank down upon the arbor-seat in a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

“What a life is now before me,” gasped she, “and without his smile to cheer it! My Piers, my Piers, how can I ever bear it! And was he to be ‘free to wed,’ he asked—no; a thousand times no. I would rather see him dead before my eyes! He was half frightened at my plan, I know.” When papa said he was glad to see that there was ‘no nonsense about me,’ it was different; I did not mind his words; but Piers thought ill of me for that, I know. What do they mean, these men, who bring us up to splendor and pleasure, who flatter us till there is no more simplicity of nature in us than in themselves, and then despise us for being what they have made us!”

Presently growing calmer, she put aside the tresses that had fallen over her drooping face, and gazed before her with eyes no longer tearful. “How glad I am,” mused she, ‘he did not press me for the details of my scheme. He spared me there, indeed, as did my father too. How I flushed up, I know, when papa said this morning: ‘There is nobody to marry you hereabouts, Gwendoline, who does not know a deal too much of the position of my affairs.’ But yet he had no suspicion of my plan. Even he has not the brains that I have, and much less Piers.’ And yet, ah, how I love dear Piers!” With a softened look on her proud face, and with her hands folded over her bosom, as though nourishing the fond thoughts that nestled there, Gwendoline moved slowly toward the house.

CHAPTER III.

A MOMENT OF TERROR.

GWENDOLINE’S meeting with her lover had occupied more time than either of them had been aware of—it was not that their spoken words had been so many, but the thoughtful silences between them, the tender caresses, the lingering farewell, had prolonged their interview far into the night. Her maid Fanny was the only one of the household who had not retired to rest when her young mistress glided, ghost-like, up the garden-steps, and through the glass door of the drawing-room. Notwithstanding that the population about St. Medards were, many of them, what are called a ‘rough lot,’ burglaries were quite unknown in the neighborhood, and no shutters were ever fastened at Bedivere Court. Indeed, it would have been a work of considerable time, as well as toil, to close the whole house, and on that particular night there was not a man in the place to do it. Butler, properly so called, there was none; and Sir Guy’s own man, without whom he never moved, had accompanied his master to the county-town. Sir Guy had been

accustomed to such ministrations all his life, and he was not the man, whatever his pecuniary difficulties, to retrench in any matter of personal comfort, and far less forego them. This absence, however, of all the male folk did leave the few inmates of the Court somewhat lonely and defenseless, and a young lady with more ‘nonsense about her’ than Gwendoline Treherne might possibly have felt nervous. Waiting-maid Fanny, who had been sitting up by herself, with nothing but plain needle-work to absorb an erratic imagination, had been in fact for hours a prey to terror; in her ears every creak of doors and rattle of windows had sounded like burglary with violence. It was infamous, thought she, of Sir Guy to have left them all so unprotected; and it would only serve him right if, when he returned home on the morrow, he should find the house pillaged and his daughter murdered; not that the selfish old gentleman would care much for the latter, so long as the plate was safe and his cigars untouched; nor perhaps even at all, since, if Miss Gwendoline was put out of the way, he would probably proceed to enjoy himself with less regard to respectability than even at present. What on earth should he want of poor Adolphe, making him sit behind the carriage over those long, dreary miles of moorland, which the dear fellow hated so cordially, when his company and conversation would have been so unspeakably consolatory to herself on an occasion like the present? For Adolphe, although not exactly in the heyday of youth (he was five-and-forty at the very least, but had learned from his master to look ten years younger), had the most agreeable way with him it was possible to conceive, and was the most perfect gentleman imaginable; and how much nicer, thought Fanny, would it be to be now listening to his charming broken English, than to be sitting alone in the huge kitchen, with only the fading fire for her companion.

It was with a great sense of relief that she at last heard the boudoir-bell ring, and knew that her weary watch was finished. The very sight of Miss Gwendoline—so self-centred, self-reliant, calm—would be assuring to her. If she did not actually love her young mistress, she had no cause to dislike her, and she admired her beyond all measure. Not only as respected her personal beauty, but also for her mental qualities, which, though she herself could not fathom them, Adolphe had assured her were magnificent. “She is too great to be English” (he had informed her in a moment of enthusiasm); “she ought to have been born a Frenchwoman;” although, as for her good looks, he had hastened to add, he for his part preferred one with a rose on her cheek, and a ravishing little smile when one pats it tenderly *comme ça*. Women should not be too clever, for that was almost certain to lead them into mischief. Not that Miss Gwendoline’s cleverness was ever likely to do that, thought Fanny; for in her it always took the shape of prudence and caution. That very day she had been most unexpectedly taken into her young mistress’s confidence. Miss Gwendoline had told her that Mr. Piers Mostyn and herself, whom she had hitherto looked upon as affianced lovers, would be henceforward strangers to one another, and that that night’s interview was to be their last. It was, after all, only a foolish attachment; she said, which must sooner or later

end in disappointment, and Sir Guy had been doubtless right in peremptorily commanding her to put a stop to it. Fanny marveled to hear her speak so calmly, but never doubted her resolve, and the less so inasmuch as Gwendoline had concluded this dissertation upon her own affairs with some excellent advice with respect to Fanny's future government of herself in love-matters, which she listened to with much humility, though thinking in her secret heart that she could never discuss dear Adolphe with such equanimity, even though there was gray in one of his whiskers, and he was not the brother of a lord, as Mr. Piers Mostyn was.

But, notwithstanding this proof of Miss Gwendoline's confidence, the relation between the two girls was by no means so intimate as often exists between mistress and maid at their age. There was something about the former that was not haughtiness, and yet which kept her far more removed from her attendant than any implied difference of social position. Even now that Fanny had been made the repository of so delicate a secret—which she did not know had only been revealed to her after all the reasons for and against such a revelation had been thoroughly weighed—she did not seem to herself to possess any hold over Miss Gwendoline, and scarcely even to be on a more familiar footing with her than heretofore. Even had not her thoughts been just then occupied with more pressing matter, it is probable she would not have ventured to speak to her young mistress of that interview which she knew had just taken place, and which had, for one of her simple and impulsive nature, a very engrossing interest. Gwendoline's steady eyes and passionless face in the glass before her—for Fanny was now engaged in brushing the ample tresses of "her young lady" preparatory to her retirement for the night—would, in any case, have forbidden any such allusion. Yet Fanny had something to communicate which must needs be uttered at all hazards, no matter what reflections of her philosophic mistress she might be breaking in upon, for Fear is of all passions that which stands the least upon ceremony, and may so far, indeed, be said to be the most courageous. It was assuring, indeed, to see Miss Gwendoline so calm and stately, unruffled by any idea so vulgar as possible burglars; but then, thought Fanny, it will be all the worse for me when I am dismissed from her presence, and left to cower down under the bedclothes in my own room. Still she put off the proposition she was about to make to the very last moment, when the long brown locks hung in one broad, shining stream to the very ground, and the ivory brush had fulfilled its task to the uttermost. Then, "If you please, Miss Gwendoline, might I sleep on the sofa in your room to-night?" inquired she, suddenly; "I am so terribly frightened."

"Frightened at what, you silly girl? Are you afraid simply because Adolphe is not here to protect you, or because the wind is busy in the fir-

wood?"

"No, madam; it's not only that, but I am quite certain there will be mischief here to-night, there have been such strange sounds while I have been waiting up for you; and, just as your bell rang, I am almost certain I heard the great iron gate clang, and I am sure there is not wind enough to make it do that. If it had happened five min-

utes before, I should have even risked your displeasure by running out upon the terrace, and—"

"It was well you did not, girl," interrupted Gwendoline, severely; "such foolish follies are only suitable to regale persons of your own class with. I am sorry to refuse your request, but it is a most unreasonable one, as you ought to know. If you are such a coward as you make out, go and sleep with the cook or the housemaid."

"They would be no protection, Miss Gwendoline; indeed, I doubt whether they would not be more frightened than myself."

"That is as you please, Fanny; but I have a particular fancy for my own company to-night, and I mean to indulge it. What is that noise?"

"Lord have mercy upon us! it's the hall door banged, and they are in the house already!" gasped the waiting-maid, clasping her hands. "Oh, is Mr. Piers Mostyn really gone, ma'am; and must we all be robbed and murdered?"

"Gone! Child, are you mad? Of course he is gone. Put the candles out, and remain as still as death, while I see what this means." And Gwendoline, attired as she was in her dressing-gown and slippers, and with her long hair streaming over her shoulders, passed quickly and noiselessly from the room, which opened on to a corridor, from which she could look down into the great hall itself. Though fully aware that some intruder was in the house, she did not even now entertain the idea of burglary. Such a crime was not only, as has been said, absolutely unknown in the district—of which the leaving the front door unlocked was proof enough—but Bedivere Court was the last house in the county that a professional robber would attempt. There was little in it, indeed, to make it worth his while; and the risk, if at least Sir Guy had been at home—and his departure, quite suddenly resolved upon, could scarcely have been known—was very considerable. The baronet had fire-arms, and his determination was beyond all question. Indeed, it was rumored, not without justice, that he had used a pistol with effect upon less occasion; and if Gwendoline's heart throbbed with some excitement as she leaned over the banisters and peered down into the gloom below, it was not with fear.

All was in shadow except the central space, upon which the moonbeams poured directly from the round north window that faced the door, and at first she could see nothing. But presently the figures of two men, motionless, and doubtless in the act of listening like herself, could be made out, standing at the foot of the broad staircase. There was a whispered colloquy, and then a sound as though they were taking their boots off; and in another minute they stood together on the bottom step, and it was plain they were coming up stairs. Gwendoline shrank back into her own room, and, without heeding her waiting-maid's terrified inquiries, passed through it with hasty steps into her father's bedchamber, where which it had a door of communication. His pistol-box lay in its usual place by his bed's head, and she took from it one of the choice and highly ornamented little weapons it contained, ascertained that it was loaded, capped it, and dropped it into the pocket of her dressing-gown. She hid the box, and returned to Fanny, who had fallen on her knees, and was listening at the keyhole of the outer door, which her young mistress had not omitted to make fast. Gwendoline had fewer

ornaments of price than most girls in her position call their own. She did possess one diamond necklace, the gift of a godmother, who, in bestowing it upon her, had considered herself absolved from all obligations, temporal and spiritual; and this she thrust, case and all, into the bosom of her dressing-gown, leaving the jewel-drawer with the rest of its contents half open; then, for the first time, the hushed wail of her terrified attendant, imploring her to tell her what she had seen, and who was in the house, attracted her attention.

"Cease that whining, girl!" said she, imperatively. "Whoever these men are, you must not appear afraid of them. Look at me; do I seem afraid? And yet these jewels are not yours, but mine."

Standing in the moonlight, with one hand in the pocket of her dress, and the other raised as if for silence, her noble features no paler than usual, and not less calm, except for a certain twitching of the nostril, which spoke of insulted dignity—of angry pride rather than of any other feeling—she certainly did not look afraid. But Fanny was too much prostrated by nervous terror to pluck comfort now from even her mistress.

"Then they are really robbers, are they?" answered she. "God help us!"

"I don't know whether they are robbers or not," was the calm reply; "but they are certainly here for no good. I saw them as they were coming up stairs, and the moonlight shone upon an iron ring that was round one man's ankle. They are most likely, therefore, convicts escaped from Dartmoor."

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH EXHIBITS SOME TRAITS OF CHARACTER.

AT this moment the handle of the door was cautiously tried from the outside.

"Who is there?" cried Gwendoline, in tones whose very distinctness might have shown to a keen observer that they were the result of effort, but which at least spoke of self-possession.

There was no answer to this inquiry.

"Unbolt the door, girl!" continued Gwendoline, resolutely.

"What! let them in?" ejaculated Fanny, to whose weaker nature procrastination seemed something akin to safety. "No, no!"

"Then I will do it," said her mistress; she swept across the room like a stage-queen (perhaps she was, in some sort, rehearsing for the part she had set herself to play, when the audience without should be admitted), drew back the bolt, and threw the door wide open. Never had oaken plank divided persons more wholly different in appearance than were those two, whom she now confronted, from herself. Imagine, on the one side, the haughtiest of fair women, youthful, beautiful, and in an attire in which those of her sex and condition are only seen by their most intimate female friends; and, on the other, two outcasts, ragged, wayworn, and yet with a scowl upon their haggard faces, which recked little indeed of rank and station, and boded as ill as any royal tyrant's frown to whomsoever should cross their wishes. Although each had found means to exchange his prison clothes, and, as it seemed,

with some scarecrow of the fields, Gwendoline's quick glance had not misled her as to their true character. On the ankle of each was a strong iron ring, about which, whether for concealment or to prevent its rubbing against the limb, a rag was loosely twisted. They were both ill-looking, desperate-eyed fellows enough, and the more assimilated in ferocious expression by a three days' growth of bristly hair upon lip and chin. But even here Nature had stamped beyond erasure some points of difference. The shorter of the two, though they were both tall men, was by far the most truculent-looking. For an instant the spectacle thus suddenly presented to his gaze of transcendent female beauty and stateliness, where he had expected to meet cringing terror, took him with some surprise, and he lowered the point of his rude weapon—which was but a stake plucked from some sheepfold—at the sight of it; but the next moment, as though resenting that involuntary tribute of respect, he raised it again, and shook it in Gwendoline's face. "We want no playacting here, young woman, nor any of your d-d airs and graces. I heard you just now telling your wench there that she was not to appear to be afraid of us; but she is afraid—and small blame to her—and so are you."

"If you heard that, sir," said Gwendoline, scornfully, and keeping her eyes fixed upon the ruffian's face, notwithstanding that his weapon was held within an inch of them, "you also heard me say that I, for my part, was not afraid. Nor am I. What is it you want here, man?"

"Well, several things. Money to begin with; jewels, such as I see yonder; and food and drink above all."

"Money I have none," said Gwendoline, firmly; "or, at least, what will seem none to gentlemen of your ambition. There lies my purse, however."

"There must be more than that in a house like this," cried the villain, impatiently. "Here, you with your eyes half out of your head"—and he turned sharply round upon the wretched Fanny, who was literally petrified with fear—"is this sleek young mistress of yours telling us lies or not? If so, you had better not try the same game, I promise you."

"Indeed, dear gentlemen, we have no money," gasped the waiting-maid, imploringly. "Sir Guy is from home."

Gwendoline flashed upon her a glance as of forked lightning, yet not so swiftly but that her persecutor caught sight of it. "Ah!" said he, contemptuously, "you may spare yourself the trouble of all that, miss. We are not to be imposed upon even by a clever one like you. We have been watching about here all day in the wood above the house yonder, and know exactly how matters stand. We saw Sir Guy, if that's the master's name, take himself off, and his man with him, this afternoon; and more than that, my fine lady, we saw your young gentleman slip down the river so quietly not half an hour ago, which was a pretty time o' night, by the way, in my opinion, for a perfect lady to be courted in a garden arbor—not that Bob and I would have cared two straws, only we were so deuced sharp set for our supper."

The man who spoke these words, a waif and stray of society from his birth, had been thrown from early youth among dangerous company on

sea and land, and had fought his way among them to a bad eminence through many a bloody brawl and desperate conflict, and yet, perhaps, he had never been nearer to death than he was that moment. If Gwendoline's features maintained their outward calm, it was only by means of in-drawn breath and tight clenched teeth; her hand clutched the weapon in the pocket of her robe with feverish eagerness, while her eyes fixed themselves upon the ruffian's mocking face with a hatred that had no longer contempt to mitigate it.

"And yet, if I kill this reptile," muttered she, "my whole plan must fail."

"What are you muttering now?" inquired the ruffian, savagely. "It seems to me you are just the obstinate sort of fool as gets her brain-pan knocked in on little occasions like the present. I shall have to take you in hand myself, I see." As he stepped toward her, Gwendoline withdrew her hand from her pocket. She could not trust it there if he should lay a finger on her—and yet the thought that her scheme of life should be wrecked by this audacious scum was even more terrible to endure.

"You have no more money in the house, you say," said he, standing close beside her; "have you no more jewels than those which we have already got?" She confronted him haughtily as ever, and pointing mechanically, to give corroboration to her words, to the very spot where the diamonds lay concealed, she answered, "I have not."

"And the plate—where does Sir Guy keep his plate?"

"In the pantry, in an iron chest, of which he keeps the key," returned Gwendoline.

"This won't do, miss," ejaculated the ruffian, with a horrible oath, and he seized her roughly by the wrist.

"Stop, Dick," cried the other man, speaking for the first time. "Hands off; I can't have that. The young lady is speaking the truth, and what's the use of bullying? Besides, what could we do with plate, even if we found it. We have got the gewgaws and the money; let us now have food and drink, for I feel as famished as a wolf." The man called Dick threw sullenly from him the plump white wrist, which still retained the mark of his cruel clutch.

"You were always a fool, Bob, where a woman was concerned; but this one, at least, is not worth while for us two to quarrel over; only I don't lose sight of her while in this house, no, not for an instant. It is she who shall be our waiting-maid at table; and I shall keep my eye upon you, my fine lady, lest you should take a fancy to drug our drink. It would do you all the good in the world to have a master like me for a week or two. I'd tame you, my young tigress."

For the first time throughout this terrible scene Gwendoline fairly shuddered. Pride of lineage, pride of position, haughtiness even of character itself, must needs succumb sooner or later, if the necessity be extreme. The contemptuous stoicism of high breeding—but a faint shadow, after all, compared with the stubborn immobility of the thieving, lying savage—requires for its foundation the possession of what is vulgarly denominated the upper hand. As in some general overturn of society a Robespierre becomes as

calmly terrible as any nobleman of twenty transmitted title, who could scatter his *lett cachet* broadcast, and with tranquil face in for life the *canaille* who aspired to be his with one stroke of his pen, so, in particular where something that is not accustomed might suddenly becomes so (and, as is with a vengeance), even the supreme aristocratic contempt of it is apt to break down—pressure be only sharp enough. The sedemaneor may, indeed (and often does), resist but the victories of deportment, although means despicable, are more effectual on than in real life. Thus Gwendoline Tre, although still a glorious picture of contempt dignity—and that bold show stood her instead—had, in fact, for the moment succumbed before the insolent superiority of this ruffian. Involuntarily the vision of an ignoble life with this brutal wretch, whose grasp still felt upon her wrist, as her master, flung upon her mind, and chilled her with its horror.

"You have the keys, Fanny," said she, voice that all her resolution could not keep from tremor; "let these men have food and wine."

"Ay, and my fine lady for company," insisted ruffian Dick. "She shall sit at the head of the table, if she pleases, but at our feet shall be; next to drink, and one or two little weaknesses, I enjoy the taming of tigers above all things. And besides, Bob," added as his companion seemed again about to interfere, "who knows but that there may not be an alarm-bell in the house, which this young lady if left here to herself, would be just the one to pull with a will."

But poor frightened Fanny was by no means in a condition to undertake any housekeeping arrangements whatever; it was as much as she could do to accompany her young mistress point out to her, with trembling limbs and terribler sobs, where this and that was to be found so that Bob and Dick were in fact provided by Gwendoline's own hands; and she stood beside them while the hungry wretches ate and drank their fill—as strange a waiting-maid ever served still stranger guests. As the repast progressed, the more silent of the two men became talkative, while the other in his turn kept up the good cheer seeming only to make him morose and grim.

"I am sorry that we trouble you so, my young lady," said the former, addressing Gwendoline with some show of respect; "but we have been near two days without food, and know when we may get another meal."

As Gwendoline did not vouchsafe one word in reply, Fanny, who really felt a kindness to this man, as being evidently the milder of the two, and who had more than once interfered to check the rudeness of his companion, suggested that they should take some provisions with them.

"Right, little wench!" cried Dick; "but my fine lady shall cut it for us, and not you. Bob, you may be served as you will, but for me I like to be waited on by the quality." Gwendoline took the bread-knife, without a word, and proceeded to cut some slices, one more acquainted with the fine arts than the present party might well have likened her to Judith at the tent of Holofernes. Although this pa-

did not occur to the observant Dick, the expression of her face did not escape him. "Look at her how she cuts the loaf," he said; "how much rather would she be carving you and me with that big knife than bread to help us on our way. Be quiet, you," roared he, interrupting himself suddenly. "What noise was that outside?"

The wind had ceased, so that sounds could be heard through the night-air from far; and it was not without intention that Gwendoline had been clumsy with the wooden plate, and made it clatter upon the clothless board. She had caught the distant fall of horses' feet, and so—although less distinctly—had her persecutor. The two men started from their seats, and listened eagerly; not like hunted hares, but as wild beasts tracked to their lair, they stood with savage, eager looks, and each with knife in hand.

"Have you boats here?" cried the shorter ruffian, fiercely.

"Oh yes, sir," answered Fanny, eagerly; "there is one under the terrace, and—"

"I spoke to you," interrupted Dick, turning upon Gwendoline a look of concentrated rage; "and you shall answer me, or I will hang for—"

"Oh, answer him, Miss Gwendoline; pray answer him," pleaded Fanny, piteously.

"I will show you where the boat lies, if that is what you want," said Gwendoline.

"Be quick, then," answered the ruffian. "But, first, I will hear both of you swear by Heaven that you will say we have gone over the hill yonder, and not by water."

"Oh yes, sir, we will promise to do that. I swear to tell them what you wish."

"And you—you she-devil," exclaimed Dick, pointing at Gwendoline with his knife, "will you swear too, or not?"

Gwendoline did not speak. Once more her hand had sought the pocket of her dressing-gown.

"Well, the boat first, then," cried the ruffian, impatiently, "and we will have the promise afterward."

Gwendoline led the way into the garden at a rapid pace. The two men followed her; but Fanny's limbs fairly refused to carry her.

"Will it not be better to make both safe, Bob?" whispered Dick to his companion, hoarsely. "Dead men tell no tales, nor even dead women."

"No, no; I will not have it," answered the other, with a shudder; "there is blood enough on our hands already."

"There will be more on mine, if my fine lady does not promise what I ask her," muttered the other to himself; and both hurried down to the river's edge. Beneath the stone arbor was a boat-house, with a punt in it, and Gwendoline led them to it.

"Is there none but that?" inquired Dick, suspiciously. "You must have a skiff here, surely."

"The gentleman you saw to-night has taken it," returned Gwendoline, quietly.

"Curse him and you!" answered the ruffian, passionately. "Get in, Bob. Now, mark you, my lady, I have no scruples like my friend yonder, and upon your answer to my next question will depend whether you ever see that sweetheart of yours again or not. If it be 'Yes,' then well and good; but if it be 'No,' that word will be your last;" and as though he had known of the

weapon that she had hidden in her robe, he grasped both her wrists in one huge hand, so that she was powerless, and with the other he put the naked knife to her white throat. "Do you swear, as you hope for Heaven," said he, in a fierce whisper, "to tell those curs who are at our heels that we have gone over yonder hill an hour ago?"

She felt the sharp blade press against her skin. "Quick, quick!" cried he through his clenched teeth.

"I promise," whispered she—"I swear."

"Then you may live to trouble your sweet-heart yet," said the ruffian, with a brutal laugh, and he leaped into the punt as his companion pushed it swiftly from the shore.

There was not a moment to lose. Lights were visible, and voices heard, from the house, as Gwendoline hastily returned thither. An officer and four troopers, armed to the teeth, had dismounted in the court-yard, and the former was even then engaged in cross-examining Fanny, while some other terrified domestics stood by with greedy ears.

"It is strange how they could have gone by the moor," he said, with perplexity; "we must have surely come across them that way ourselves—"

"They are not gone by the moor," interrupted Gwendoline, gliding in with her usual stateliness, and speaking in a voice whose firmness strongly contrasted with her maid's hysterical and broken speech. "They are gone down the river, and not five minutes ago."

"Oh Miss Gwendoline, and we promised not to tell!" exclaimed the faithful Fanny.

"You promised, you coward, but not I!" answered her mistress, contemptuously. "They have taken the punt, sir, in which they can make little way. There is a four-oar in the large boat-house, if your men can row, in which you can overtake them before they have gone a mile."

"That is excellent, madam; we will be off at once. But, forgive me, your neck is bleeding. These ruffians have surely never dared to offer you any violence?"

"One put a knife to my throat, sir, and grazed it—that is all," answered Gwendoline, calmly.

"It was the shorter of our two visitors."

"And by far the most dangerous, madam. They have killed a warder between them in making their escape, and will certainly both be hung; but the man you speak of is the most ferocious ruffian that even Dartmoor ever held. Now your peril is over, I may tell you that I am as surprised as delighted to find you alive."

All this was said as the party were hurrying through the garden to the other end of the terrace, where a larger boat-house than that beneath the arbor was situated.

"The trooper who remains with the horses will be your protection until we return," continued the officer; "although, of course, there is no farther peril to be apprehended. I am glad indeed—and he courteously raised his cap—"that it has fallen to my lot to be able to afford some assistance to Miss Treherne, of whom all the world—"

"Your boat is ready, sir," said Gwendoline, coldly; "this is no time for compliment; and I shall reserve my thanks until you return with those infamous wretches as your prisoners."

"I trust to give a good account of them shortly, madam," answered the young lieutenant, not a little abashed. "You two there, take the oars; and you other, sit in the stern with all four carbines, and keep a good look-out. If they do not surrender, take good aim, and fire. Give way, men!"

The boat shot out at a pace that must needs bring them up with the object of their pursuit in a few minutes.

Gwendoline remained upon the river terrace with one or two women-servants, the latter garrulous enough, she herself rapt in thought.

"How glad I am," mused she, "that I never used the pistol. My plan of life must else have altogether failed. He could never have understood the necessity for such an action, nor forgiven me—except in his cold, formal way, though Piers would have loved me none the less. Well, there is one advantage in this night's work; that it will be sure to bring them over from Glen Druid to-morrow, and throw us still more together. That is something I shall have to thank you, hateful villain, for, as well as for this flesh-wound, of which I must make the most! He has bruised my wrist, too, with his brutal gripe; and I shall be a most interesting young woman for many a day to come! If he had only held them but a little less firmly, he would have been a dead man by this. Hark!"

The silence of the autumn night was broken by a musket-shot, of which the echoes seemed to leap from bank to bank from far down stream; and then another, and yet another shot.

"Perhaps he is a dead man now," said Gwendoline, "and his fellow-ruffian with him. I hope it is so. It would be much better that the affair should end, so far as they are concerned."

CHAPTER V.

DR. GISBORNE.

THE young lieutenant of dragoons brought back no prisoners to Bedivere Court that night, but took the bodies of two dead men into St. Medards instead. The convicts had refused to surrender, and had been shot down accordingly. "It was the best thing that could possibly have happened to them," as every body said. Of course it would have been a more exciting course for the present narrator to have preserved at least ruffian Dick alive, with his vengeance for her broken promise hanging throughout this volume over the head of the proud and lovely Gwendoline; but to Truth even Sensation must be sacrificed, and the incident of the burglary has been only mentioned just as it really occurred, in order to illustrate the character of her who may now be literally termed our heroine, since she did in fact, after that strange night's work, become the cynosure of admiring eyes throughout the country round. Her presence of mind, her noble demeanor under such trying circumstances, and especially her resolution, under pain of death itself, to withhold a promise that on one of her blue blood would of course have been more binding than the oath of any middle-class personage, were, thanks to Fanny's communicativeness, the theme of a hundred pens, notwithstanding that her mistress abhorred such vulgar publicity, and

discouraged it to the uttermost. The sympathy, indeed, of the whole district for this beautiful and heroic young lady was so marked and extensive (for even the ratepayers felt grateful to her for having rid them of Bob and Dick), that Sir Guy had almost begun to hope that it might assume the form (and dimensions) of a service of plate.

"In case it should take that pleasing shape, my dear," was his characteristic advice to his daughter, "it will be necessary, before accepting it, to consider whether it is worth our while to do so; to count the cost in the most practical manner; to consider whether the gain would be of such magnitude as to outweigh all other considerations—such as that loss of *prestige* which almost always accompanies the acceptance of any public gift. If the subscription for the article in question—let us say a service of gold plate—should reach five thousand pounds, my dear, I should recommend you to accept it; but if it fall short of that amount, I should consider it my duty to decline it, in your name; and to add, that I should not have permitted you to take it had it cost fifty thousand."

Sir Guy had established with his daughter that relation of perfect confidence which is so often wanting between parent and child. His frankness in the statement of his views to her on every point was always complete. His character, indeed, was naturally candid; he had no false shame, nor, in fact, shame of any kind; and it was commonly agreed of Sir Guy Treherne that, though he might not be without his faults, and even his vices, you saw the worst of him at once, and could never complain that you had been imposed upon by appearances. Much, we do not deny, should have been forgiven to the last male descendant of an ancient family, who was also a baronet, and who, although far from rich, had judiciously spending every shilling upon himself, contrived, throughout his life, to deny himself nothing in the way of luxury; so far as that went, there were as many allowances to be made for him as for the most spoiled darling of Fortune. But still, though he was no dissembler, Sir Guy had a certain pleasing *bonhomie* about him—or could have, when he pleased—which had all the effect of the most finished hypocrisy at a third of the cost. With satire of the sharpest at his command, he never intentionally wounded a fellow-creature's feelings—not that he gave himself the least trouble to avoid it, but that his fine tact (the result of long training in the school of manners) steered him always clear. His air was conciliatory, and without condescension; his smile, though stereotyped, was like the approbation of a seraph. His attire was always faultless; not even his daughter had ever caught Sir Guy in his dressing-gown. His wig was such a marvel of art that it was a matter of doubt, even among his neighbors, as to whether he wore his own hair. His small, delicate hands—which trembled a little, if you were rude enough to watch them narrowly—showed no traces of that gout the tortures of which at times made him believe in the possibility of a Gehenna. Upon the whole, he suggested some highly-executed automaton, which gracefully expresses almost every human feeling without possessing it, and it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that it was the universal opinion that, whatever his shortcomings—by which phrase the absence of mo-

lity, religion, and all the unselfish sentiments are indicated—Sir Guy Treherne was pre-eminently a gentleman.

Even the one vulgar virtue which, in its vulgar form, Sir Guy condescended to possess, and, when necessary, to exhibit—that of personal courage—was dashed with artificiality. He would have fought his enemy or his friend across a pocket-handkerchief, and never changed color at the measured "One, two, three" of the signaler; but he shrank from illness, and still more from the approach of death. He used to openly confess that, had he been rich enough, he would have maintained a family physician—"Half a dozen of them," he was wont to add, "rather than one domestic chaplain." And even as it was, he liked to see his doctor pretty often. It was one of the many blessings for which Sir Guy used to express himself grateful—for he was polite, if he failed to be winning even to Providence itself—that there was a most excellent physician at St. Merreds. Dr. Gisborne was an accomplished and highly-educated gentleman, a philosopher, a man of great and varied experience in human affairs, and a most agreeable companion; but what topped all, in the baronet's estimate of his merits, was that he "understood" Sir Guy—by which, of course, he meant that he understood his constitution, knew which particular spring was likely to give way, and patched it up, so that the over-ried apparatus of his constitution (which had been an excellent one in its time) was kept going with as few breakdowns as possible.

Dr. Gisborne and himself were in reality of the same age—namely, sixty-four, and neither of them looked to be within ten years of it. But what Art had done for the baronet in this respect, Nature had accomplished for the physician, so that the equality was only superficial; for external appearance they were both fine old men; but one was a heartless shell, the other as still green and vigorous to the core. With all his experience of mankind, Dr. Gisborne had still retained a certain simplicity. He was an old bachelor; yet the gambols of a child could afford him pleasure, and the beauty of a woman touched him with a certain reverence. His devotion to Gwendoline, for instance, was so chivalric and complete that, when Sir Guy, during that conversation with his daughter of which we have spoken, had remarked, "There is no one to marry you hereabouts," he had added, with characteristic pleasantry, "unless you mean to take Dr. Gisborne." Gwendoline had certainly no intention of doing that; and yet the physician was, next to Piers, the man who had for her the greatest attraction. Sir Guy had told him truly that he had once observed that Dr. Gisborne was the man most worth talking to she had ever met; and the physician was not perhaps insensible to flattery from such lips as Gwendoline Treherne's. At all events, he always put forth his best conversational powers to please her, nor ever balked at wishes, no matter into what channels she might choose to lead his talk; and he liked her none the less that some of them were strange ones for the belle of a London season to select. Dr. Gisborne was not a wit, and at a modern dinner-table he would have made no great figure; that rapid interchange of jest and fancy which forms the charm of to-day's entertainments he could have taken no part; his forte was not so

much conversation as monologue. He was a raconteur of the very first water, but of the old school, and would have bored the present generation in Pall Mall to extremity. But to Gwendoline much that he had to say was not only attractive in a very high degree, but, as she felt, was a lesson of life; she gleaned from him the experience of threescore years, and carefully garnered so much of it as seemed likely to be useful to her. The study of humanity was itself interesting to her, as it is to all persons not wholly inane and frivolous, and the more so because the results of it were practical. She asked him for no advice. He only saw in her an attentive and beautiful listener. No woman could have ever suffered harm from Dr. Gisborne's teaching—but then he was wholly unaware that Gwendoline Treherne was his pupil at all. Perhaps, when launched upon the great sea of his experience, he suffered at times his memory to carry him too much whither it would; not, indeed, that he ever forgot whom he was addressing, in the sense that Madame Propriety would understand it—but his narrations were so wholly pagan that they might have been recorded by some savage chief, supposing it were possible to find one with whom truth was any object. To Dr. Gisborne all such matters were the mere outside of life; to his perception the great scheme of Fatherly Beneficence still existed, notwithstanding that he had mixed with a society in foreign parts where people were not only backbiters, but actually devoured one another. To Gwendoline these strange experiences of her old friend and neighbor only corroborated the view of Life which her own bringing-up had already formed for her; it showed to her, in its most favorable aspect, a landscape set more or less with (artificial) flowers, bordered and terminated by the grave.

Dr. Gisborne's reminiscences were, of course, not exclusively cannibal; but those which he liked best to dwell upon, as Gwendoline to listen to, were undoubtedly such as dealt with the most striking, and often the most terrible of human facts. Those who war against Sensation—a cuckoo note of invective, however, which has certainly afforded them extraordinary pleasure—are indeed fighting, if not against human nature itself, against all the more robust and intelligent of mankind, and are as likely to succeed as those who advocate raw salads in preference to those prepared according to the famous poetical recipe. It is not really that they are more delicate in their tastes than other people, but only that they are more ignorant and feeble. They boast of their weak stomachs, but it is not their digestive organs which are at fault so much as their mental powers. To such bread-and-butter folks every thing out of their own little round of life is toast and caviare, with a dash of lemon; and their private opinion of *Lear* and *Othello* would be found quite as unfavorable, if any one took the trouble to ask for it, as the last railway novel with a murder in it, and the illustration of that attractive incident upon its yellow cover. The talk of Dr. Gisborne would certainly have sometimes made the flesh of those good gentry to creep—caused them to feel more "goosy" than even nature had intended them to be. It might be easily imagined that the burglary at Bedivere Court would rather have encouraged than otherwise the creepy-crawly sort of converse in which

the doctor and Gwendoline both delighted. But talk will often fly off at a tangent to apparently quite alien topics, and so it was in this case. Dr. Gisborne had been one of the first at St. Medards to hear of the incident, and had ridden over early in the morning, and obtained the details from his favorite's own lips, as they walked together in the garden.

"Of course you are none the worse for it all, my dear," said he, admiringly. "Give me your pretty white hand again—pulse tranquil, skin without a touch of fever; that's well. It would have given some girls fits for life."

"I couldn't afford to have fits for life," observed Gwendoline, demurely; "but I really was a little frightened at one time, when the gentleman who was called Dick remarked that he should like to be my master, and break my spirit. Then, I own, I felt cold all over."

"That was curious," said the doctor, musing. "One would have thought when he seized you by the wrist—upon which the brute has left his mark, by-the-by, I see—that that would have been the supreme moment of terror."

"No," said Gwendoline, simply; "I did not feel so frightened then."

She did not mention that she had had a loaded pistol in the pocket of her dressing-gown even to her friend the doctor; she had discussed that matter in her mind in the mean time, and decided upon silence.

"Well, it was a most striking experience," said the physician, regarding her from head to foot with great approbation. He had known her for many a year, and was far prouder of her than Sir Guy himself had ever been. "That fellow Dick must have been as bold as Jack Cade to dare to talk so to such a queen."

"A queen; nay, my dear doctor," returned Gwendoline, smiling; "but that was not *his* opinion, since he called me a tigress."

"Yet that was strange, too," replied the physician, gravely. "He, of course, meant the expression as a compliment in its way. With folks of his stamp, who belong to the family of the great *Carnivora*, it is the tigress who is queen. I always thought you myself as like the pictures of Catharine Alexiewna as a good girl can be to a very bad woman."

"The Empress of Russia, was she not?" said Gwendoline, not without a thrill of pride, as she reflected that three such different men as Piers Mostyn, ruffian Dick, and Dr. Gisborne should have thus, within twelve hours, all paid their tributes of admiration to her imperial bearing.

"Yes, she was empress," returned the doctor, contemptuously; "but she was more fit to have kept a public-house. You know I only care for Nature's empresses, such as you, my dear."

"Yes, you are a true republican, I believe," observed Gwendoline, thoughtfully; "you take people for what they are worth, and so forth; your motto is, 'Handsome is as handsome does,' and your arms—but there, you despise arms, of course."

"Well, my arms are a pestle and mortar, you know," replied the doctor, smiling.

"And you have been all over the world, and seen life in all its phases," continued Gwendoline, still musing.

"Just so, my dear; I have seen a great many men and cities, but I prefer my lodgings at St.

Medards. In that respect I am like an old gentleman whom my grandfather, when quite a boy, was in the habit of seeing—a small but very neatly dressed personage of fourscore years and more, who had three very stately daughters. 'For my part,' he was wont to say, 'I am quite content and comfortable as I am now; but these ladies here, they can never forget that their father was once Lord Protector of Great Britain.' I am quite of Mr. Richard Cromwell's opinion—for the little old gentleman was no less—but I am afraid, my dear, you side with his daughters. Well, that is the way of all the women folks; they are caught with a glittering fly at all seasons; but I hope you will not henpeck me, my dear, as the Misses Cromwell did their papa."

"And yet, doctor," said Gwendoline, thoughtfully, and without taking notice of her companion's last remarks, "you have an uncommon reverence for some folks, who would be nothing but for the position they have inherited."

"My dear Gwendoline, if you and I were in the House of Commons together," observed the doctor, with some severity, "and you had indulged in such a remark, there would have been cries of 'Name, name,' from somebody; but being a young lady, your little assertions need no corroboration."

"Now, that is the only thing which makes me doubt your sincerity," exclaimed Gwendoline; "you are always ruffled when any body questions this republicanism of yours."

"Not at all, my dear, not at all; but I think it is as important to stick to truth in speaking of matters of opinion as in speaking of matters of fact. I am interested, I own, in the maintenance of the principle which you have epitomized in your phrase of 'Handsome is as handsome does.' I think it very much for the public weal that all things should be taken at their true value, and not at a fancy price; and as in these parts at least, I am generally in a minority of one, I do not like to be misrepresented (and especially by Miss Gwendoline Treherne), so that even what little weight my influence might possess is thereby counteracted, or even thrown into the opposite scale. Now, what was it, my dear, which caused you to say that I pay reverence to people on account of the accident of birth?"

"Well, doctor, you know that we could scarcely tear you away from Llandulph, the day of our picnic, merely because of that imperial tombstone—"

"Oh, that was it, was it?" interrupted the physician, smiling. "Well, I do plead guilty there. But the fact is that, in the first place, I have no objection even to emperors, when their line is extinct; and secondly, my admiration was extorted by the vicissitude of the family in question, rather than by its quondam eminence. The tombstone (if you remember) was erected to the memory of a simple country gentleman, who had married the daughter of one William Ball, Esq., of Hadley; but he had a very curious name. It was Theodore Palæologus—direct descendant of a race that had given eight emperors to Constantinople. He died two hundred years ago, it is true; but the inscription says he left three sons; and yet, when—the other day—a deputation came over here from Greece, in hopes of finding a descendant of the great Constantine fool enough to be their king, no more could be heard of the

family than of the old Derby Finderns—and indeed even less.”

“I don’t know about the Finderns,” said Gwendoline, not displeased to lead her companion from a topic in which she had nothing in common with him—for as there were few more devoted to the show and glitter of life than herself, so there was none more contemptuous of them than the philosophic physician; the one might have been likened to Semiramis, the other to Aristides; only in this case Aristides exhibited the anomaly of a republican antiquary: even the memory of a Tyrant became respectable in Dr. Gisborne’s eyes, after a sufficient number of centuries.

“Well, the story of the Finderns is very curious. I only know it from Burke’s account; but it always struck me as an interesting illustration of the vanity of what is called ‘position,’ and especially of that ludicrous provincial branch of it which is called a ‘position in the county.’ The Finderns of Findern were a great county family from Edward I.’s time; the old local records are full of them. Yet, when Sir Bernard went down there, upon one of his wild-goose chases—pedigree-hunting, poor creature—he could not find one single relic of the old race; not a stone seemed to have belonged to them—not even in the church or church-yard. ‘We have no Finderns here,’ said the villager; ‘but we have the Findern flowers;’ and he led the visitor to a field which still showed dim traces of terraces and foundations. ‘There,’ observed he, pointing to a bank of garden-flowers grown wild, ‘there are the Findern flowers, brought by Sir Geoffrey from the Holy Land; and do what we will, they will never die.’ That seems to me very touching,” observed the doctor, pathetically; “although, of course, the poor Finderns never did any thing worth speaking of, or which any body would care to remember. For that matter, indeed, the old houses that *are* remembered—the oldest houses in the world—have little to boast of in the way of merit. In a long line of ancestors, it would seem strange if some were not more or less distinguished. And yet how seldom is this the case! The Montmorencies, the Tremouilles, the Rochefoucaulds, have, after all, had but one representative. Of all the *grands* of Spain, how many have made it worth the world’s while to remember them? What have the most ancient nobility in the world—the Milesians—done for human kind? What have the Hapsburgs?—among whom there has been but one with a genius, and that only for aggrandizing his own family. Or that ducal family of Arcot—the most venerable in the world, as we are told, simply because it can *trace* its descent up to the Deluge (thereby saving you and me the trouble of tracing ours some distance for ourselves)—what did they ever do, beyond spending a good deal of money in such idle researches? The whole system of hereditary nobility is contrary to fact, as well as to philosophy. It is the new blood, and not the old, which enriches the world. You smile, my dear Gwendoline, because you see me curveting on my hobby, but it is a matter of fact and common sense, and lies within your own observation. Who is it, for instance, who does the most service in this very district? Which is the most active for usefulness and for good—the old families or the new? Look at

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that newcomer and parvenu—as all the old gentry hereabouts but your father (who has better sense) are accustomed to call him—Mr. Ferrier, of Glen Druid, for instance. What an impetus has he given to every thing that is worth pushing on, above ground and below it, as well as on sea! I tell you that our laborers in the fields, our workmen in the mines, our fishermen at St. Medards, have better reason to praise the wise benevolence that enriches without enslaving them, than all the feudal patronage to which they have been accustomed for these hundreds of years.”

The enthusiastic philosopher paused for sheer want of breath, not at all because he lacked other illustrations of his theory.

“Mr. Ferrier is a very good man,” said Gwendoline, drawing figures upon the gravel with the point of her parasol, “and doubtless he does good. How hard it seems that such a misfortune as you were hinting at the other day should be impending over him! I suppose there is no doubt of the fact?”

“Unhappily, none whatever,” replied the physician, with a deep sigh.

“I almost wish you had never told me about it,” said Gwendoline. “It was terribly thrilling to hear that sweet little woman talk but yesterday of going to Italy as soon as she had got over her trouble, and I all the time knowing that she was doomed never to see her native land again, but, instead of its bright landscapes and sunlit sea, to go down into the cold, dark grave.”

“Yes, poor soul; yet that will certainly happen; and it is likely enough the newborn babe will share her fate. That is scarcely to be regretted, if (as is almost certain) the seeds of its mother’s disease should lie within it. And, indeed, so terrible a family foe is consumption—the complaint, of all others, which seems to have a vendetta against an entire race—that Mr. Ferrier will be fortunate if even his little Marian is spared to him.”

“The dear little thing seems very delicate,” said Gwendoline, pitifully.

“Yes, a beautiful hot-house flower, like her mother,” assented the doctor; “as fair, and almost as fragile. The whole prospect is so gloomy that I scarcely dare to exhibit it to the husband and father, and yet sooner or later it must be done.”

“That will be very dangerous, doctor, surely? I should have thought it would have killed poor Giulia at once to tell her that she was like to die.”

“No doubt it would, and therefore she must not be told. But I ought not much longer to conceal the matter from her husband.”

“Well, that is one of those uncharacteristic statements with which you now and then surprise me, my dear doctor, more than I can say. Is it possible that you, who are so wise, and who know men so well, imagine that Mr. Ferrier is a man capable of hiding such a secret from one he loves? Of course, you will do your duty—perform the etiquette which, I suppose, the faculty imposes on you in such cases—but such a course, I must say, appears to me to be the extremity of folly. You magnify your calling, doctor, and perhaps, as compared with others, with reason; but certainly, in some matters, your profession is as conventional as that of any fashionable preacher.”

"How so?" inquired the doctor, with an air half serious and half amused.

"Well, take the case in question. Nothing can save this poor woman, you tell me; though, to look at her, so bright and beautiful, the thing seems incredible to me—the story of her doom a mere nightmare; and yet, besides the risk of hastening the calamity, you must needs make this old man wretched before his time."

"There is something of reason, Gwendoline, in what you say," returned the physician, thoughtfully; "as indeed there always is, and it is doubtless worth consideration. But was not that a ring at the front door just now? You must be prepared for visits of congratulation this morning, of course. Why, surely that is some one I know at the drawing-room window?"

"Yes; it is Mr. Ferrier," said Gwendoline, quietly. "How strange we should just have been talking about him! And see, he has brought out poor Giulia with him!"

CHAPTER VI.

AN OPPORTUNE INVITATION.

ON the broad gravel-walk that ran between the whole frontage of the mansion and the garden were now standing a married pair, whom no one who saw them for the first time could possibly have taken for man and wife. The husband might have been a contemporary of Dr. Gisborne's; but if his frame was stouter, his eyes were less bright, and indeed had already something of the lack-lustre look of advanced senility, while his thin hair and neatly trimmed whiskers were white as snow. He had a quiet, and not unthoughtful face; but a physiognomist would have predicated weakness from the formation of the mouth, notwithstanding its pleasant and even genial smile. Upon his arm leaned a young woman, so youthful indeed as to be almost like a child, notwithstanding that she had already a little girl of her own of three years old, and that she was soon again to become a mother. She was very beautiful; and it did not need the heavy mantle which she wore, even on that mild autumn morning, to show that she had been accustomed to a far more genial climate even than that of Cornwall. Her olive skin and raven hair might have belonged to a gipsy; but Giulia Ferrier had none of the strength and hardihood of that wandering tribe. Her cheeks had a color more brilliant, yet more limited in its extent than health ever bestows, and her large black eyes had a preternatural lustre. She was accustomed, in her half-playful, half-complaining way, to speak of herself as "the exotic;" and an exotic she was—a flower of a genial clime transplanted to a too hardy soil, a too vigorous air. Nor was it only the climate to which she was unsuited. English manners, English customs, English tastes, were more than alien to her—they were antagonistic. The well-meant civilities of "the country," which had been freely extended to her, appeared at best but clumsy courtesies. Its hospitalities were also oppressive; and, on the other hand, the most estimable families beginning with Tre, Pol, and Pen, were quite unable to "make Mrs. Ferrier out." She adored her child, she had a passionate love for flowers (the only natural

taste in which she could now indulge), and she had the utmost respect for her husband. A warmer feeling could scarcely be expected from a girl of twenty toward one who might have been her grandfather.

Their marriage had taken place under circumstances that were somewhat romantic, considering the character of the bridegroom. It was certainly curious that a Scotch gentleman of mature age and Presbyterian convictions, who had passed all his life in mercantile pursuits, should offer his hand (with an income of many thousands a year in it) to a penniless foreigner of the Catholic faith; but this had actually taken place. Her father, a struggling painter, had died in Rome while Mr. Ferrier happened to be staying in the Eternal City. She had been left forlorn and friendless; and his kind heart had taken pity upon her. He could not (thus he reasoned with himself) leave her there alone and unprotected, and only the more likely, if he left her well dowered, to be the prey of some designing adventurer. But, in fact, there was no necessity in the case of one so beautiful as Giulia for even an elderly gentleman to excuse himself at all. They married, and, upon the whole, they had lived very happily together; only the poor girl had been always haunted with the desire of revisiting her native land, and she had at last coaxed from Mr. Ferrier a reluctant permission to do so, so soon as the expected babe should be born, and the mother have gained sufficient strength for the journey. From the moment that his assent had been obtained, she had seemed a new creature, full of innocent mirth and joyful expectation—like a child who has been promised a new toy. It was only those two who were now advancing to meet herself and her husband across the garden who had the least suspicion that that promise could never be fulfilled.

Gwendoline, whose grace and beauty delighted Giulia's artistic eye, had always, of all their Cornish neighbors, been her favorite, and the greeting between the two girls was very cordial.

"You great courageous creature!" cried the latter, in her pretty broken English (of which, however, she was not a little proud, as well as of her scraps of knowledge, of our barbarian usages and phrases generally), and holding her friend at the extremity of her own slight arms, as if to get a complete view of such a heroine. "How sleek and unruffled you look, after all your exploits. Look at her, Bruce, dear! Is she not a wonder?"

"Miss Treherne has always struck me as being equal to any occasion that might require courage and self-command," observed Mr. Ferrier, with polite elaboration.

"But it must have shaken you, my dear," went on Giulia, impetuously. "It is impossible that even your nerves can have gone through such an ordeal as Fanny has just been describing to us without having suffered for it in some way. As for me, the very hint of a horrid brigand and being so much as in the house would have killed me outright."

"But they were not brigands, I assure you, my dear Giulia," replied Gwendoline, smiling. "Not at all the picturesque sort of ruffians that are grown under your native skies, with peaked hats, and tasseled gaiters, and gracefully arranged shawls. They were in rags and tatters; and, instead of a beautiful inlaid stiletto, each

had a vulgar bludgeon. The whole affair was thoroughly English, and would have had no interest for an artist like you at all."

"No interest? I never was so interested in any thing in all my life. Pray, tell me all about it. They had masks of crape, had they not? and an iron ring round their ankles; and one of them—yes, that is why you wear that handkerchief—pricked your lovely throat with the point of his wicked knife?"

"Why, you never mentioned that, Gwendoline," said Dr. Gisborne, reprovingly.

"No, of course she didn't," continued Giulia; "she would die rather than confess herself to have been either frightened or hurt. But it is certain she must have been both; and what Bruce and I mean to do is to carry her back to Glen Druid this very day, to stay there, for change of air and scene, till she is recovered. If she will not come of her own free will, you must give us a certificate of the necessity of her removal, doctor, and then we will take her by force, for that is English law; besides, we have found out—like the brigands—that Sir Guy and his man are away, so that there is nobody to resist. Come, I call upon you, gentlemen, in the queen's name—for that is the law too—to attach the person of Miss Gwendoline Treherne, and help me to put her in prison at Glen Druid."

It was pitiful to hear her musical and childish talk—pitiful to watch her lively and graceful movements, as she laid her little hand in mimic arrest upon Gwendoline's rounded arm; and to know that all that vitality and beauty were doomed to perish, and she so totally unconscious of it. It was almost as pitiful to see the old man's delight and pride in his young wife's winning ways; and well might Dr. Gisborne shrink from the task of telling him that there must soon remain of them nothing except a bitter memory.

"But you will come, Gwendoline?" urged Giulia, with plaintive persuasion. "It will be so much better for you than remaining here, where every breath of wind must sound like robbers; and you will be quite safe at Glen Druid, because there are five great hulking men in the house, and I don't know how many more about the grounds."

"She is actually boasting of the extent of her establishment!" exclaimed Gwendoline, smiling. "My dear Giulia, how thoroughly acclimatized you are getting."

"Nay, Miss Treherne," interposed matter-of-fact Mr. Ferrier, gravely; "I am sure it was not my wife's intention to boast of any thing of the sort."

"I boast?" cried Giulia, in her turn. "Oh dear, how dare any body say that! I wish we had no servants at all; I wish—" She stopped suddenly, catching sight of a distressed look upon her husband's face. "I wish I was not such a naughty child, dear Bruce," said she, with pathetic self-reproach; and she put up her olive cheek, tinged with a rose-blush, for the kind old man to kiss.

"Well, for my part," said Gwendoline, simply, "I should like to change households with you, my dear. You should have Adolphe at Glen Druid, and welcome; and all your people should come and live in this great empty barrack, where there would be plenty of room for them, if nothing else. Then I should be properly waited upon,

do nothing for myself, and become the fine lady I should like to be."

"You dear, lazy darling, then come to Glen Druid!" cried Giulia, rapturously. "You shall never put foot to ground there, unless you please. We will sit in the greenhouse and gather fruit with the grape-catcher, without moving from our easy-chairs. You shall have my own maid, Susan, all to yourself, because she understands lazy people; and a horse—no, you shall not have a horse to yourself, because you would be running away from me; but we will have the pony-carriage all to ourselves, and you shall drive the little wretches, for you will not be afraid of them as I am. Oh dear, how nice it will all be!"

"It will certainly be very nice," said Gwendoline, thoughtfully; "at least very nice for me. But—"

"But, you would doubtless say, 'I should not like to leave my father,'" observed Mr. Ferrier, kindly. "Our invitation, however, of course extends to Sir Guy also, if he will give us the pleasure of his company—though I know he loves his own roof when he is not in town."

Giulia was silent, for she disliked Sir Guy above all men. His artificiality, which, in its would-be grace and pretended candor, seemed to ape her own naturalness, and to mock at it, was hateful to her. She thought him a selfish old wretch, who treated his daughter abominably; and his taking his valet with him, and leaving her without male protection the previous night, had been one of the topics of her discourse with her husband on their way to the Court that very morning. Gwendoline had never thought of her father's accompanying her. Her "but" had had no reference to him whatever; she had looked toward Mr. Ferrier, and affected to hesitate, in the hope that he would have finished her sentence for her in another manner, by joining his own entreaties, that she should return to Glen Druid, to those of Giulia. She would not have had Sir Guy under that roof with her just now, for the most cogent reasons.

The situation might have been somewhat embarrassing but for the opportune interposition of Dr. Gisborne.

"I think I can answer for Sir Guy," said he, "for it was only a day or two ago that he was asking whether I did not think a few weeks in London would not be a beneficial change for him. When a patient puts his case in that way, his doctor always understands how to treat it, and I told him he ought to go; so that little difficulty is easily settled. As for you, Miss Gwendoline" (and he gave her a significant glance, which she well understood to refer to Mrs. Ferrier), "it is certainly my opinion that you ought to accept this invitation."

"Excellent man!" cried Giulia, clapping her small hands. "I never liked a horrid doctor before. Well, you know I can't bear them, Bruce, with their long faces and their solemn head-shakings, which seem to foretell all sorts of horrors. They frighten me almost to death before they begin to cure me. And I didn't mean to be rude to you, Dr. Gisborne; so please to forgive me, if I seemed to be so."

"I quite forgive you, dear Mrs. Ferrier," said the physician, with a smile that was a sad one, in spite of himself; "and I trust it may be long before you have any cause to see me show a long

face, or shake my head. It is most wise as well as kind of you to suggest this change for Gwendoline; and my certificate she shall have, if she can not be induced to go with you without force of arms."

"There, you hear!" cried Giulia, joyfully. "Now make your arrangements at once, my darling. Tell Fanny to pack your things, and of course we will take her with us in the carriage; for my husband is not too proud—are you, dear Bruce?—to sit on the same seat with a waiting-maid."

"Certainly not, my dear; I have nothing to be proud of," returned Mr. Ferrier, in a tone that rather belied his words.

"Nay, nay; you offered me your own Susan, remember," cried Gwendoline, playfully, "and I shall keep you to your word, Giulia. Glen Druid would not be the complete change which is to do me so much good if I took Fanny with me." Next to her father, in fact, her waiting-maid would have been the most objectionable person to take with her, and the one even more likely, from her unquenchable loquacity, to injure her plans.

"Come just as you will, alone or attended, my dear Miss Treherne," said Mr. Ferrier (not perhaps without a feeling of gratitude for her having preserved him from having Fanny for his fellow-traveler), "so long as you do come, and for my wife's sake."

"What a *gauche* old man is this!" thought Gwendoline. "How difficult it will be to deal with him!"

"I trust we may be able to make Glen Druid sufficiently attractive to keep you with us for some time."

"It is most kind of you to say so, Mr. Ferrier. I will do my best to repay you by being of as much use as I can to your treasure here, and to my favorite little playmate, Marian. Now, do you sit down here, dear Giulia, for I am sure you must be tired of standing," and she wheeled toward her a garden-chair, "while I run in to tell Fanny to pack up."

"I am not at all tired, darling," replied Mrs. Ferrier; but, as her friend moved away, she sat down wearily enough, nevertheless.

"What a kind, dear creature Gwendoline is, and so unaffected, is she not, doctor? But there, I need not ask, for I know you have been in love with her for years."

"That is true, my dear madam," said the physician, smiling gravely. "I must own the soft impeachment. Nothing but the disparity"—he was about to say "in our ages," but, recollecting on the instant in whose presence he stood, he turned the sentence as swiftly and naturally as swallow on the wing—"the disparity of birth has prevented me from declaring myself her devoted lover. I am quite a *novus homo*, and the Trehermes were at Bedivere, as folks say, in the days of the Cornish giants."

"Good blood is nevertheless a good thing," observed the possessor of Glen Druid, with a more decided Northern accent than was usual with him; "and, so far as birth goes, though some of them have but little siller, the Ferriers of Lanarkshire can count a direct progenitor for every finger."

"Does that include the thumbs, sir?" inquired the physician, with an air of much interest.

"It does, sir," said the old man, drawing himself to his full height. "I am the tenth male of my line; and, please God, if all things go well," and he cast a significant glance at the unconscious Giulia, to whom pedigree was a dead letter, "there may be an eleventh, come Christmas or thereabouts, as I am given to understand."

"Amen!" said Dr. Gisborne, with tender gaiety. "Let us hope it may be so."

CHAPTER VII.

GLEN DRUID.

GLEN DRUID, despite its antiquated name, was quite a modern mansion, purchased of him who built it by Mr. Ferrier, and transformed by the latter from a merely handsome country seat into one of the most beautiful and perfect residences in the south of England. Since Giulia had always so regretted her native land, her husband, himself greatly averse to return thither, had gallantly resolved to bring Italy as much as possible into Cornwall. The climate, although moist, was really warm, and every flower and plant to which she had been accustomed was either made to grow in the sheltered gardens or in the vast conservatory upon which the great drawing-room opened. In the house itself, again, were flowers in profusion; and flowering-trees alternated in the fine hall and corridor with exquisite statuary. Pictures of the old masters adorned every sitting-room; but Giulia's boudoir was hung round with the works of her own father's brush, with each of which was associated in her mind some story, which was now a tender recollection.

In curious contrast with the luxury within the house, and with the artificial beauty of its grounds and gardens, was the natural scenery which surrounded the place, and made it seem an oasis as well as a paradise. It stood in a little bay on the western coast; north and south of it stretched a long line of granite cliffs; on the east, from the winds of which it was, however, well shielded, lay a vast waste of moorland, once, say the learned, positively a forest, but now without a stick of timber. There was nothing, indeed, that stood higher than its patches of gorse for miles except a stone erection, the nature of which might possibly have puzzled you, but about which the learned were equally sure. It consisted of three mighty stones, with a fourth upon the top of them, of such a size that how it could ever have been hoisted to its position in pre-scientific days was a marvel in itself. These few materials formed quite a stately dwelling; and, so far as the roof was concerned, they might have served as such (without any calling on the landlord for repairs, although your lease had been one of those lengthy ones extending to nine hundred and ninety-nine years); but the sides were undeniably draughty for such a purpose. The natives, as usual, attributed its construction to the Cornish giants, one of whom, it was suggested, had left his three-legged stool in that exposed situation; but our antiquarian friends termed it a cromlech, or ancient burying-place. Beneath it was doubtless interred some hardy chief, who had expressed a wish, since the northeasters had seemed to do him good during his lifetime, to be buried where he could always hear them blow.

ornaments of price than most girls in her position call their own. She did possess one diamond necklace, the gift of a godmother, who, in bestowing it upon her, had considered herself absolved from all obligations, temporal and spiritual; and this she thrust, case and all, into the bosom of her dressing-gown, leaving the jewel-drawer with the rest of its contents half open; then, for the first time, the hushed wail of her terrified attendant, imploring her to tell her what she had seen, and who was in the house, attracted her attention.

"Cease that whining, girl!" said she, imperatively. "Whoever these men are, you must not appear afraid of them. Look at me; do I seem afraid? And yet these jewels are not yours, but mine."

Standing in the moonlight, with one hand in the pocket of her dress, and the other raised as if for silence, her noble features no paler than usual, and not less calm, except for a certain twitching of the nostril, which spoke of insulted dignity—of angry pride rather than of any other feeling—she certainly did not look afraid. But Fanny was too much prostrated by nervous terror to pluck comfort now from even her mistress.

"Then they are really robbers, are they?" answered she. "God help us!"

"I don't know whether they are robbers or not," was the calm reply; "but they are certainly here for no good. I saw them as they were coming up stairs, and the moonlight shone upon an iron ring that was round one man's ankle. They are most likely, therefore, convicts escaped from Dartmoor."

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH EXHIBITS SOME TRAITS OF CHARACTER.

At this moment the handle of the door was cautiously tried from the outside.

"Who is there?" cried Gwendoline, in tones whose very distinctness might have shown to a keen observer that they were the result of effort, but which at least spoke of self-possession.

There was no answer to this inquiry.

"Unbolt the door, girl!" continued Gwendoline, resolutely.

"What! let them in?" ejaculated Fanny, to whose weaker nature procrastination seemed something akin to safety. "No, no!"

"Then I will do it," said her mistress; she swept across the room like a stage-queen (perhaps she was, in some sort, rehearsing for the part she had set herself to play, when the audience without should be admitted), drew back the bolt, and threw the door wide open. Never had oaken plank divided persons more wholly different in appearance than were those two, whom she now confronted, from herself. Imagine, on the one side, the haughtiest of fair women, youthful, beautiful, and in an attire in which those of her sex and condition are only seen by their most intimate female friends; and, on the other, two outcasts, ragged, wayworn, and yet with a scowl upon their haggard faces, which recked little indeed of rank and station, and boded as ill as any royal tyrant's frown to whomsoever should cross their wishes. Although each had found means to exchange his prison clothes, and, as it seemed,

with some scarecrow of the fields, Gwendoline's quick glance had not misled her as to their true character. On the ankle of each was a strong iron ring, about which, whether for concealment or to prevent its rubbing against the limb, a rag was loosely twisted. They were both ill-looking, desperate-eyed fellows enough, and the more assimilated in ferocious expression by a three days' growth of bristly hair upon lip and chin. But even here Nature had stamped beyond erasure some points of difference. The shorter of the two, though they were both tall men, was by far the most truculent-looking. For an instant the spectacle thus suddenly presented to his gaze of transcendent female beauty and stateliness, where he had expected to meet cringing terror, took him with some surprise, and he lowered the point of his rude weapon—which was but a stake plucked from some sheepfold—at the sight of it; but the next moment, as though resenting that involuntary tribute of respect, he raised it again, and shook it in Gwendoline's face. "We want no playacting here, young woman, nor any of your d-d airs and graces. I heard you just now telling your wench there that she was not to appear to be afraid of us; but she is afraid—and small blame to her—and so are you."

"If you heard that, sir," said Gwendoline, scornfully, and keeping her eyes fixed upon the ruffian's face, notwithstanding that his weapon was held within an inch of them, "you also heard me say that I, for my part, was not afraid. Nor am I. What is it you want here, man?"

"Well, several things. Money to begin with; jewels, such as I see yonder; and food and drink above all."

"Money I have none," said Gwendoline, firmly; "or, at least, what will seem none to gentlemen of your ambition. There lies my purse, however."

"There must be more than that in a house like this," cried the villain, impatiently. "Here, you with your eyes half out of your head"—and he turned sharply round upon the wretched Fanny, who was literally petrified with fear—"is this sleek young mistress of yours telling us lies or not? If so, you had better not try the same game, I promise you."

"Indeed, dear gentlemen, we have no money," gasped the waiting-maid, imploringly. "Sir Guy is from home."

Gwendoline flashed upon her a glance as of forked lightning, yet not so swiftly but that her persecutor caught sight of it. "Ah!" said he, contemptuously, "you may spare yourself the trouble of all that, miss. We are not to be imposed upon even by a clever one like you. We have been watching about here all day in the wood above the house yonder, and know exactly how matters stand. We saw Sir Guy, if that's the master's name, take himself off, and his man with him, this afternoon; and more than that, my fine lady, we saw *your* young gentleman slip down the river so quietly not half an hour ago, which was a pretty time o' night, by the way, in my opinion, for a perfect lady to be courted in a garden arbor—not that Bob and I would have cared two straws, only we were so deuced sharp set for our supper."

The man who spoke these words, a waif and stray of society from his birth, had been thrown from early youth among dangerous company on

end in disappointment, and Sir Guy had been doubtless right in peremptorily commanding her to put a stop to it. Fanny marveled to hear her speak so calmly, but never doubted her resolve, and the less so inasmuch as Gwendoline had concluded this dissertation upon her own affairs with some excellent advice with respect to Fanny's future government of herself in love-matters, which she listened to with much humility, though thinking in her secret heart that she could never discuss dear Adolphe with such equanimity, even though there was gray in one of his whiskers, and he was not the brother of a lord, as Mr. Piers Mostyn was.

But, notwithstanding this proof of Miss Gwendoline's confidence, the relation between the two girls was by no means so intimate as often exists between mistress and maid at their age. There was something about the former that was not haughtiness, and yet which kept her far more removed from her attendant than any implied difference of social position. Even now that Fanny had been made the repository of so delicate a secret—which she did not know had only been revealed to her after all the reasons for and against such a revelation had been thoroughly weighed—she did not seem to herself to possess any hold over Miss Gwendoline, and scarcely even to be on a more familiar footing with her than heretofore. Even had not her thoughts been just then occupied with more pressing matter, it is probable she would not have ventured to speak to her young mistress of that interview which she knew had just taken place, and which had, for one of her simple and impulsive nature, a very engrossing interest. Gwendoline's steady eyes and passionless face in the glass before her—for Fanny was now engaged in brushing the ample tresses of "her young lady" preparatory to her retirement for the night—would, in any case, have forbidden any such allusion. Yet Fanny had something to communicate which must needs be uttered at all hazards, no matter what reflections of her philosophic mistress she might be breaking in upon, for Fear is of all passions that which stands the least upon ceremony, and may so far, indeed, be said to be the most courageous. It was assuring, indeed, to see Miss Gwendoline so calm and stately, unruffled by any idea so vulgar as possible burglars; but then, thought Fanny, it will be all the worse for me when I am dismissed from her presence, and left to cower down under the bedclothes in my own room. Still she put off the proposition she was about to make to the very last moment, when the long brown locks hung in one broad, shining stream to the very ground, and the ivory brush had fulfilled its task to the uttermost. Then, "If you please, Miss Gwendoline, might I sleep on the sofa in your room to-night?" inquired she, suddenly; "I am so terribly frightened."

"Frightened at what, you silly girl? Are you afraid simply because Adolphe is not here to protect you, or because the wind is busy in the fir-wood?"

"No, madam; it's not only that, but I am quite certain there will be mischief here to-night, there have been such strange sounds while I have been waiting up for you; and, just as your bell rang, I am almost certain I heard the great iron gate clang, and I am sure there is not wind enough to make it do that. If it had happened five min-

utes before, I should have even risked your displeasure by running out upon the terrace, and—"

"It was well you did not, girl," interrupted Gwendoline, severely; "such foolish follies are only suitable to regale persons of your own class with. I am sorry to refuse your request, but it is a most unreasonable one, as you ought to know. If you are such a coward as you make out, go and sleep with the cook or the housemaid."

"They would be no protection, Miss Gwendoline; indeed, I doubt whether they would not be more frightened than myself."

"That is as you please, Fanny; but I have a particular fancy for my own company to-night, and I mean to indulge it. What is that noise?"

"Lord have mercy upon us! it's the hall door banged, and they are in the house already!" gasped the waiting-maid, clasping her hands. "Oh, is Mr. Piers Mostyn really gone, ma'am; and must we all be robbed and murdered?"

"Gone! Child, are you mad? Of course he is gone. Put the candles out, and remain as still as death, while I see what this means." And Gwendoline, attired as she was in her dressing-gown and slippers, and with her long hair streaming over her shoulders, passed quickly and noiselessly from the room, which opened on to a corridor, from which she could look down into the great hall itself. Though fully aware that some intruder was in the house, she did not even now entertain the idea of burglary. Such a crime was not only, as has been said, absolutely unknown in the district—of which the leaving the front door unlocked was proof enough—but Bedivere Court was the last house in the county that a professional robber would attempt. There was little in it, indeed, to make it worth his while; and the risk, if at least Sir Guy had been at home—and his departure, quite suddenly resolved upon, could scarcely have been known—was very considerable. The baronet had fire-arms, and his determination was beyond all question. Indeed, it was rumored, not without justice, that he had used a pistol with effect upon less occasion; and if Gwendoline's heart throbbed with some excitement as she leaned over the banisters and peered down into the gloom below, it was not with fear.

All was in shadow except the central space, upon which the moonbeams poured directly from the round north window that faced the door, and at first she could see nothing. But presently the figures of two men, motionless, and doubtless in the act of listening like herself, could be made out, standing at the foot of the broad staircase. There was a whispered colloquy, and then a sound as though they were taking their boots off; and in another minute they stood together on the bottom step, and it was plain they were coming up stairs. Gwendoline shrank back into her own room, and, without heeding her waiting-maid's terrified inquiries, passed through it with hasty steps into her father's bedchamber, with which it had a door of communication. His pistol-box lay in its usual place by his bed's head, and she took from it one of the choice and highly ornamented little weapons it contained, ascertained that it was loaded, capped it, and dropped it into the pocket of her dressing-gown. She hid the box, and returned to Fanny, who had fallen on her knees, and was listening at the keyhole of the outer door, which her young mistress had not omitted to make fast. Gwendoline had fewer

passionate desire to revisit Italy, I think I know the secret of it. I am much mistaken if, when she came to England as Mr. Ferrier's bride, she did not leave a lover in Italy. If so, I am sorry for her, for it is certain she will never see him, poor fragile little woman. I began to fear I should scarcely have dragged her up that cliff alive!"

CHAPTER VIII.

SUSAN RAMSAY'S VIEW OF AFFAIRS.

THERE are a good many mischievous creeds which are believed in by society at large as though they were true faith; and, on the other hand, there are a few popular errors which it would be better for the world had they more foundation in fact. Of the latter, the following are examples: that your true aristocrat is rarely insolent; that a bully is *always* a coward; and that children are never deceived by a mere pretense of fondness for them. This last was proved utterly untrue in the case of Marian and Gwendoline. Gwendoline was not fond of Marian, her character being one of those exceptional ones among young women to which child-nature is not attractive; but she laid herself out to please her young friend, and she succeeded. She was never so occupied but that she could put aside book, pen, or needle, to have a romp with the child. She was always ready for a run with her in the garden, or a scramble upon the Warrior's Helm, taking matronly care to hold fast that trusting little hand wherever the path was perilous. On wet days, she would take her on her knee, and show her pictures or tell her fairy stories by the hour. By these means, she not only reaped her reward in a plentiful crop of affection from her small playmate, but won golden opinions from her parents.

Mr. Ferrier would often express his fears, in his grave way, that the child was trespassing upon Miss Treherne's good nature, though he received her assurance that "she doted upon children, and especially upon good ones, like Marian," with the most perfect faith; while his wife only lamented that she was not strong enough to play her friend's part in these romps and gambols, which were in reality gradually transferring the love of her own little one from herself to Gwendoline. She had not the least suspicion or jealousy of the guest, who made herself so useful to her in a hundred ways, and not in one officiously. She felt better for her presence in body and mind; for not only did Gwendoline, without the least parade of assistance, save her from physical fatigue, but kept her cheerful by her lively and graceful companionship, and by high spirits that never seemed to flag. Without sentiment, save her passionate love for absent Piers, and without sympathy, Gwendoline had a marvelous adaptability, which stood her in good stead for both. Her tact in pleasing was so consummate that it fell little short of geniality, and might have been easily taken for it by more incredulous eyes than those of simple Giulia. Her fine voice, when she sang to her hostess—her brilliant execution, when she played, seemed to lack no feeling—it was supplied by the listener's own spiritual nature. She read aloud to her the poets of

her land, and the "soft bastard Latin," syllabled by one so divinely fair, seemed to take the exile's soul with a new bliss. In short, Giulia yielded herself up a willing victim to these pleasant arts, and grew to love and to lean upon her friend with a feverish fondness that was in itself disease. And all this time Death was beckoning to her with his silent finger, and drawing nearer and nearer to her every day.

Mr. Ferrier knew, of course, that his wife was delicate, but attributed her later and later rising of a morning, her earlier withdrawal to her couch at night, to her condition, and to the winter season (always trying to the fragile woman), which had now set in with rigor. There was only one person in the Glen Druid household who suspected the true state of affairs, and who even suspected the guest. Gwendoline, whose magical beauty fascinated the very footmen, and whose gracious affability disarmed the envy of the domestics of her own sex, had failed to make a favorable impression upon Susan Ramsay. Perhaps, although the mother had forgiven Gwendoline for engrossing the affections of the child, the nurse had not—for Susan was Marian's head-nurse, as well as Mrs. Ferrier's maid; or perhaps Gwendoline's very charms and accomplishments had placed the puritanical Scotchwoman in antagonism to her. But, at all events, Susan had never been fascinated with her, for it was not her way to be fascinated, like the other members of the household; and the more she watched her—and she watched her very closely—the less she liked her mistress's new friend. She held her tongue, as it was her nature to do, but she thought a good deal about Miss Treherne and her ways, and more and more unfavorably. She even gave herself the trouble to reflect upon her antecedents, of which she knew something, from Gwendoline's own maid, and would have liked to know more. But Fanny had been dismissed rather summarily from Bedivere Court within a week of her young lady's departure from it. The excuse was ready at hand, in the indiscretion with which she carried on her flirtations with Monsieur Adolphe; but the real cause lay in the waiting-maid's too garrulous tongue. Even as it was, this had done Gwendoline an ill turn, for it had informed Susan that at one time at least the belle of the county had had a lover; and was it not very strange, and even suspicious, that in that young lady's many confidential chats with Mrs. Ferrier, to which the waiting-maid was often a privileged listener, she should never have desecrated upon that attractive theme? Reticent enough upon other subjects, even Susan liked to talk about Sam Barland, the apothecary's head assistant at St. Medards, to whom she had been engaged for years, and might marry to-morrow, but for certain far-sighted and prudential reasons of her own; and it was not natural, she held, in Gentle nor Simple, to have been courted by a laddie, and not crack about it to one's friends.

Miss Gwendoline, then, was, in her eyes, "a deep one," to begin with; and, in the next place, she was a wicked one, for she never went to kirk. It was just excusable, thought Susan, in the case of her own mistress, brought up among outlandish folk, in the faith of the scarlet woman, that she should not take advantage of the spiritual comforts which Mr. Ferrier had furnished for the locality in the shape of a Presbyterian church and

end in disappointment, and Sir Guy had been doubtless right in peremptorily commanding her to put a stop to it. Fanny marveled to hear her speak so calmly, but never doubted her resolve, and the less so inasmuch as Gwendoline had concluded this dissertation upon her own affairs with some excellent advice with respect to Fanny's future government of herself in love-matters, which she listened to with much humility, though thinking in her secret heart that she could never discuss dear Adolphe with such equanimity, even though there was gray in one of his whiskers, and he was not the brother of a lord, as Mr. Piers Mostyn was.

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All was in shadow except the central space, upon which the moonbeams poured directly from the round north window that faced the door, and at first she could see nothing. But presently the figures of two men, motionless, and doubtless in the act of listening like herself, could be made out, standing at the foot of the broad staircase. There was a whispered colloquy, and then a sound as though they were taking their boots off; and in another minute they stood together on the bottom step, and it was plain they were coming up stairs. Gwendoline shrank back into her own room, and, without heeding her waiting-maid's terrified inquiries, passed through it with hasty steps into her father's bedchamber, with which it had a door of communication. His pistol-box lay in its usual place by his bed's head, and she took from it one of the choice and highly ornamented little weapons it contained, ascertained that it was loaded, capped it, and dropped it into the pocket of her dressing-gown. She hid the box, and returned to Fanny, who had fallen on her knees, and was listening at the keyhole of the outer door, which her young mistress had not omitted to make fast. Gwendoline had fewer

sequences, but made up her mind to meet the worst. She did not know, of course, that Susan Ramsay—as heedful of the slightest indications afforded by an enemy as herself—had noticed the superscription on the envelope when she came to take her mistress's breakfast up stairs, but she was as much prepared for such a misfortune as to meet the more certain remonstrances of Sir Guy. Gwendoline left nothing to chance; perhaps she was not without some vague idea that she was thus making herself independent of Providence itself.

The letter, which she presently took out with her upon the lower terrace, and reread carefully again and again, walking slowly to and fro, contained no great matter, but it affected her powerfully, nevertheless. As the blind are transported by music, and the dumb by color, so she, with whom so many of the spiritual senses were shut, was all the more given up to her passion for her lover; if she cared for no other human being in the world, she was devoted to handsome Piers Mostyn. His written words were dearer a thousand times than the presence of any other; and she almost forgave him now, in the rapturous delight she reaped from his very act of disobedience. "And yet there was little in his letter, one would have thought, to have given an affianced woman pleasure. It was written from a great country house in Yorkshire, at present filled with a large company of guests, and was mainly descriptive of his gayety (though he was absent from her) and of his flirtations (though he had plighted to her his troth). But, at all events, he was open enough in what he said; if the tone of his epistle was frivolous throughout where it was not bitter, it was not the less characteristic on that account; and reading his words, she might easily imagine that he himself was beside her, with his light laugh and brilliant cynicism. Moreover, there was here and there a passionate protestation of affection for her, that made up for all shortcomings and misdoings, and which brought, as she read it, the color to her cheek and the love-light to her eye. "You need not fear, notwithstanding all this impatience, darling," wrote he, after one of those fond paragraphs, "that I shall not wait for you, for there is no opportunity of doing otherwise: all the lovely creatures that I have just described entirely understand that I am quite ineligible. Perhaps their mothers have told them so, but it is quite as likely that their own fine perceptions have informed them that I am a Detrimental. We flirt, of course, immensely; they practice upon me in that way as though I were a lay-figure; but though, to do them justice, they draw no very hard-and-fast line in that way, they make me quite understand it is only a flirtation and nothing more; one of them actually asked me if it was true that I had been in a marching-regiment, and got so brown in India! So you may imagine the social position that had been assigned to me. When I told her how I had been in the diplomatic line, and got my tan from the Persian sun, I did not improve matters. 'Ah!' said she, 'an unpaid *attaché*, I suppose;' with such a stress upon the first syllable. So, you see, my beautiful darling"—and Gwendoline murmured these words aloud as a mother crows over her babe—"I am yours, and ever yours, perforce."

"If you please, ma'am," said a cold and quiet

voice, all the colder and calmer by contrast with those burning words, "Miss Marian asked to be allowed to join you on the terrace."

Rapt in her own honeyed thoughts, she had not observed Susan Ramsay's approach, who now stood beside her, holding little Marian's hand, and looking at her as though her small black eyes were bradawls. "Dear little thing!" said Gwendoline, stooping down to pat the child, and at the same time to hide her own confusion; "I am afraid I must disappoint you this morning, pretty one." But here she caught Guy's well-preserved figure bearing down upon her from the house; and, reflecting within herself that the little girl would form a convenient third in the expected meeting, should it prove embarrassing, she added: "But there, I can never resist my little pet. You may leave her, Susan; and tell your mistress not to be nervous about her getting on the rocks, for that we shall not leave the garden."

Now Miss Marian had not asked to be allowed to join her "booful Gwendoline," as in her baby-talk she designated her new friend, until she had had that idea suggested to her by Susan herself, who wished to have a pretext for intruding on Miss Treherne's meditations; and now that she was dismissed, the waiting-maid did not return to the house, as Gwendoline took for granted she would do, but retired to an arbor in the upper terrace, from which, unseen, she could both see and hear much that was passing below. She also had marked Sir Guy's approach, and argued rightly that the indolent baronet, who seemed to prefer a rocking-chair by the fire to any outdoor exercise her master could offer to him, had not made that unaccustomed pilgrimage down so many stone steps, on that bright but frosty morning, without an object, which was probably a private talk with his daughter.

"Now, if I can only look over both their hands at once," thought Susan, borrowing a metaphor from a diversion she had seen practiced in the servants' hall, and which had often excited her vehement reprehension, "then I shall know better how to play my cards."

CHAPTER IX.

SIR GUY AND GWENDOLINE.

NOTHING could be quieter or more demure than Sir Guy's aspect as he walked slowly, and with that slightly balancing air which advanced age, in combination with high-heeled boots, is apt to produce, toward his daughter and her little playmate. Nothing less like an indignant father bent upon strong measures with his disobedient offspring could be imagined than that unruffled though not unwrinkled face, with a sort of peach-bloom upon the cheeks, of which himself and his man Adolphe alone knew the secret. Partly as typifying the careless gayety of his disposition, and partly because he was conscious that in that trembling of his fingers lay his weak point, it was his custom to keep at least one hand in his pocket; the other, when abroad, was generally provided with a clouded cane, which steadied while it seemed to adorn his movements. A closer observer of human nature than she who was now watching him in se-

cret with all her eyes, might have gathered from the unnecessary force with which his cane was brought down on the gravel at every step, that he who carried it was not at ease in his mind; but to Susan, the baronet looked the beau-ideal of sleekness and prosperity, and her mind flew instantly for comfort to the end of the green bay tree, and of him who was dressed in purple and fine linen every day.

To her intense chagrin, the baronet addressed his daughter in that outlandish tongue to which she had so often thanked Heaven that she was a stranger, but which she would for once have given one of her own sharp ears to comprehend.

"There is no occasion for so much prudence, papa," was Gwendoline's reply in English. "This is too small a pitcher to carry a long ear; and since I know that you are going to scold me, it is better to use the language that is made for scolding. Let us keep our French for enjoyment, I do beg."

Gwendoline's face was calm and even smiling, and she playfully pushed little Marian's ball before her with her foot as she spoke, and bade the child run after it.

"You had a letter from Piers Mostyn this morning, Gwendoline?"

"Yes, papa. I have just been reading it."

"And yet you told me that you had broken with him altogether, and forbidden him to correspond with you."

"And so I did," said she; "but all people have not the talent for obedience that your daughter possesses. He has written to me, as you say; and after all, there is no such great harm done."

"You don't know that," returned the baronet, sharply. "What I saw, others may have seen; and he may write some day when there may be sharper eyes upon the look-out than there are at Glen Druid. It is greatly against a girl, in some men's view, that she should keep up a correspondence of this sort."

"It takes two to make a correspondence, papa—as it does a quarrel." She spoke the last words with great deliberation, and confronted her father face to face. "I have never written to Piers, and I do not intend to write to him. I told him that I should not do so, and I always keep my word."

"Then it's a damned piece of impertinence of Mr. Mostyn's part to pester you in this manner, and I shall let him know that that is my opinion. Whom is the fellow sponging upon? for I noticed that the letter had a Yorkshire postmark, and his brother's place is not in Yorkshire."

"He is staying with his cousin, Lord Caruthers, at Stonegate, and has been there for a week or so; just as we are staying here with the Ferriers, who are not our cousins."

"Pooh! pooh! there is no parallel in the two cases at all, and you know that as well as I do. This Piers Mostyn has not a roof to his head, nor a shilling that he can call his own to buy him a night's lodging. He can be only welcome at Stonegate to take the bores off his lordship's hands, or to turn over the leaves of his young wife's music-book."

"Well, I would not write to him to tell him that, if I were you—or any thing else. You can quite safely leave him to me, papa. When you last spoke to me upon this matter, your unre-

serve and frankness were so complete that it was quite impossible to misunderstand you. I am sensible of the state of my own affairs, and I dare say almost as much interested in them as you are yourself."

"This letter did not look as if such was the case, Gwendoline; that's all I meant to say," remarked Sir Guy in mollified tones. "You're a very clever girl, I know; but all women are fools when a young fellow like Mostyn pretends to be in love with them. I don't deny the vagabond his good gifts—far from it. If he had ten thousand a year, and would pass his word to give up whist, you should marry him to-morrow. But, without wishing to hurt your feelings, my dear, and allowing him to have good taste in his *tendresse* for yourself, Gwendoline, Piers is a born fool. I have watched his play at the Portarlington, and no man, no matter what his fortune or his luck, could stand his ground for long with such ideas as he has. A man who finesses with king, ten— But, there! you know nothing of what I'm talking about. What I want you to understand is this—that time is money with a girl in your position more than in any thing, and that here at Glen Druid (I wish you would send that confounded child away) you are losing your time."

"Not altogether, papa, I think," said Gwendoline, quietly. "The ball is at my feet; and see, my darling Marian, I am going to send it for you farther than ever;" and off toddled the small creature, leaving her seniors to converse alone together as before.

"Well, not altogether, I grant," said Sir Guy, gravely. "It is always well to gain a foothold with people like the Ferriers. If the worst comes to the worst, you will always have a home here, I presume: you have made friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, and they can scarcely have a more pleasant habitation to offer one than Glen Druid."

Susan Ramsay in her place of espial lifted up hand and eye aghast at this idea; to hear her excellent master spoken of in that manner, and this Satan in polished leather boots applying Scripture to his own ends!

"Yes, the Ferriers are stanch friends, papa, I assure you; but I fancy you have found *that* out already for yourself."

"Not at all, not at all, my dear," answered Sir Guy, with a wave of his cane. "It is true I have had a little 'business transaction' with our friend and host, in which he showed a liberal spirit. But he got his *quid pro quo*, good moorland, for his money; all between the sky and the central fire is his, my dear; and who knows but that there may be copper and tin beneath that unpromising-looking turf, enough to repay him ten times over."

"I am glad it was quite a business transaction," remarked Gwendoline, coldly. "I was afraid you might be laying yourself and me under some sense of obligation."

"Not a bit, my dear Gwendoline," said the baronet, striking his chest theatrically, which, being much padded, only emitted a dull thud; "the obligation, if any, lies on the other side. There are few Scotchmen, and, for the matter of that, few English, I thank Heaven, but like to be on intimate terms with any one who has a handle to his name. Talk of the lever—there is

no power in this charming country to be compared with that of the *handle*; if one only possess, in addition, a few ancestors (and you may dig bushels of yours and mine out of the Bedivere vaults), it is quite surprising how marketable the property comes to be." And Sir Guy Treherne gave a patronizing smile upon sea and sky, as though they too might be not insensible of his affability, and rattled the sovereigns in his unaccustomed pocket. "But, after all, my dear Gwendoline," resumed he, gravely, "the affair you hint at was a small thing; a mere retaining fee in respect of that interest which I hope I shall never cease to feel in your private affairs, and not to be mentioned in the same breath with them. Moreover, the moor is gone, and I have nothing more to sell. What I have, therefore, to urge upon you now is the urgent necessity of your leaving Cornwall, and coming up at once to town; for it is not here, as I have hinted to you, but only in London, that you can expect to meet with a suitable *parti*."

"Now I wonder what the wicked old wretch can mean by *that*?" thought Susan Ramsay.

"Of course," returned Gwendoline, coldly; "that goes without saying."

"Well, I want you to go without saying—that is, without saying any thing to the contrary," said the baronet, peevishly. "I detest argument and bother, and I know so very much better what is good for you than you do yourself. You will get no good by being here any longer. You can't hide yourself away from the world of fashion for an indefinite time, and then come out again like a *débütante*, and carry all before you, as you did last year. If you do not hold the position that you have once secured for yourself, another, believe me, will step into your place, whom it may be difficult to oust."

"You speak of the belle of the season as if she were a crossing-sweeper, papa," said Gwendoline, with a quiet smile.

"Never mind the homeliness of the metaphor, my dear; the fact is exactly as I have stated it. You must cease playing nursery-maid to that little brat yonder, and sick-nurse to Mrs. Ferrier, and return with me to town next week."

"I can not leave Glen Druid so abruptly, papa," answered Gwendoline, gravely; "but I promise you I shall remain with Mrs. Ferrier not much longer, though I don't know exactly how long or short the time may be."

"Why, I heard you, and I must say to my amazement, making plans with her only yesterday for accompanying her in the spring to Rome."

Gwendoline looked cautiously about her, and once more sent her easily pleased little playmate for a long run after her Sisyphean toy. Susan, keeping her body well concealed, craned forward eagerly, so as to lose no word of the coming communication, the importance of which showed itself even in Miss Treherne's calm and composed face.

"Mrs. Ferrier will never see Rome," said Gwendoline, in low but distinct tones; "she will never set foot again on her native soil."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Sir Guy, with genuine horror, for the idea of death, even when it did not concern himself, was obnoxious to him as vulgarity itself. "You don't mean to say she is going to die! Pooh! it don't kill every woman to have a baby, although it killed your poor

dear mother—a beautiful, delicate creature she was—quite unfit for that sort of thing. Mrs. Ferrier, to be sure, does not seem very strong, but—"

"She is a doomed woman," interrupted Gwendoline, solemnly. "Nobody knows it but Dr. Gisborne and myself; but so it is. When the baby is born, she will die—that is quite certain."

"Why, bless my soul! then it might happen any day," ejaculated Sir Guy, reflecting instantly how very disagreeable the occurrence of an incident of that kind under the same roof with him would be, and deciding in his own mind to receive a letter the next morning which should require his presence in Pall Mall at once.

"Yes, it might happen any day, and it must happen within a month or so," said Gwendoline, coldly.

"It does not seem to disturb you much," observed Sir Guy, involuntarily, for he was really staggered at his daughter's *sang-froid*.

"No, papa; I am not easily disturbed by other people's misfortunes," returned she. "I have my own affairs to look to; and, as you have so often told me, one's own affairs, even when they are little ones, are of more interest than the great ones of other people. Besides, if I can not credit your excellent training with the whole of my philosophy, I am accustomed to the idea of what is about to happen. I have known the truth for many weeks. When I have taken my friend's feverish hand, and kissed her hectic cheek at morn and eve, I have often said to myself, Shall I ever do this again? or, when I next touch them, will they be cold and dead?"

"What a dreadful notion!" exclaimed the baronet, with a movement of disgust. "I am sure I am sincerely sorry for the poor woman, and grieved for my friend Ferrier's sake. I know what it is to lose a wife myself. But, as I can not possibly be of any use here, and, in fact, should be very much in the way—Should I not, Gwendoline, eh, now?"

"Certainly, papa, you would be of no use here in case any thing happened to Giulia; and I think you would be quite right to leave Glen Druid."

"You do, do you? Well, that is quite my view. If I could be of any possible service—but then I can't; now you—would you be prepared to go with me, Gwendoline, in case any important business should make it necessary for me to leave to-morrow—or how?"

"I shall stay here, papa," said Gwendoline, firmly, "till all is over."

"Now there you are right again, my dear. I like to see women behave kindly and friendly toward one another—it's a thousand pities they don't always do it. Yes, yes; you'll stay, and there will be no necessity for my coming down again here to fetch you, will there? If the railway had got here, it would be different; but posting comes so devilish expensive, don't you see?"

"I understand the situation exactly, papa; and the other situation also, about which we spoke at first. Believe me, I am quite prepared for the inconveniences to which I must necessarily be subjected by remaining here, and I do not wish you to share them. All I ask is that you keep what I have told you a profound secret—that is absolutely necessary for more than one reason."

"My dear Gwendoline, I will be silent as the gra—I mean, as the Warrior's Helm yonder; you may depend upon me for that, since I never speak upon such disagreeable matters at all. I am almost sorry that you mentioned the thing; and yet any thing is better than to have had it happen while I was— Dear me, and Dr. Gisborne came yesterday, without my sleeping-pills. I don't know what I shall do to-night without my pills."

"Some one shall be sent at once to St. Medards for them," said Gwendoline, quietly. "And now, Marian, my darling, I think we must go in, for dear mamma will be expecting us."

And so the old man, and the young girl, and the child went up the steps together, and by the arbor—from which, but a few minutes before, the hidden listener had fled, with pallid cheeks and beating heart—and found Mr. Ferrier himself at the front door, who asked, in cheerful tones, whether Miss Gwendoline did not think it would "do" for Giulia to take a drive that morning, while the sunshine lasted, since, in his opinion, there was "nothing like fresh air for setting a lady up when she was a little ailing."

CHAPTER X.

PLAIN SPEAKING, AND ITS RESULTS.

We have said that Susan Ramsay was by nature reticent, except when she allowed herself the pleasure of conversing upon the topic of Mr. Samuel Barland; but she had also the gift of preaching, or, at all events, of reproving evil-doers in ministerial language, in quite a remarkable degree, and enjoyed the exercise of it exceedingly. It was, therefore, with the utmost difficulty that she restrained herself for four-and-twenty hours from giving a piece of her mind to Miss Gwendoline Treherne respecting the wicked duplicity of her conduct with regard to her poor mistress. But, although she felt moved to this so strongly, and her conscience even reproached her with some cowardice as she thought of the injunction "to reprove, rebuke, in season and out of season," prudential reasons restrained a while her righteous indignation. It was advisable, in the first place, to wait until her two enemies were reduced to one, which happened at noon on the next day, by the departure of Sir Guy—a step necessitated by a summons to town of the last importance, which had arrived by that morning's post. Her master, and even her mistress, accompanied the baronet to the hall steps; and she saw from an upper window the hypocritical old wretch take the latter's hand, and raising it to his lips, express a hope that the next time he had the pleasure of seeing her, she might be quite well and strong; then he kissed his daughter's cheek, and bade her take the greatest care of their dear hostess, or he should never forgive her; and then there was a long, warm leave-taking with shrewd, but unsuspecting Mr. Ferrier—the Mammon of unrighteousness, as he had called him—which Susan, who "could not abide such falseness," had not the patience to see out, but drew her head in, and shook it menacingly at wickedness in high places generally, with a particular reference to the Treherne's of Bedivere.

But, even now that Sir Guy was gone, no opportunity offered itself for some hours for the deliverance of Susan's testimony against his daughter, since her good sense told her that that must be done without a witness. Miss Treherne was far too self-contained a foe to be attacked with mere vehemence and indignation before a third party, with whom one dexterous but quiet party might seem to put the assailant in the wrong; so she waited with quick beating heart and ire suppressed throughout that day, even until her mistress had retired to her boudoir preparatory to going to bed. Thither, as often happened while Susan ministered unto her, came Gwendoline, also in her dressing-gown, to have a cozy chat with her dear Giulia; and this was, of all that had happened that day, the severest trial to the justly indignant waiting-maid; for the conversation of the pair, to which she had perforce to listen, turned upon their plans and projects for that coming spring, which the one was so well aware that the other would never see. To hear her poor mistress talk with such gayety and fervor of her native land, and of how she was certain she should be quite herself again if once she could breathe its warm blue air, was sad and pitiful enough; but when she came (as she did) to take such thought of that bright future as to picture the fair scenes they would visit in company, a grave slow voice interrupted her suddenly: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, dear mistress, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

"What does she mean—what *does* this woman mean?" asked Mrs. Ferrier, looking with frightened face at Gwendoline. "Why do you interrupt me, Susan, with such dreadful words?"

"It is only her Scotch way," said Gwendoline, in Italian. "These Puritans can not resist the temptation to quote a text, and especially when it tends to turn one's happy thoughts into melancholy. It is nothing more, darling: do not mind her."

Susan did not speak again; she did not, of course, know what Gwendoline had said to her mistress, but the use of the foreign tongue was a humiliation to her (as it always is to those who do not understand it when it is understood by others), and she felt that her imprudence had already put her at a disadvantage. She would be silent henceforth, if she had to hold her tongue with her teeth. But no farther ordeal had to be undergone. Her late remark, brief as it had been, had shaken the nerves of her fragile mistress, and indisposed her for farther talk.

"I am going to bed," said she, with childish peevishness; "and I have no farther need of you, Susan, to-night. If you have any thing else to say that is unpleasant to listen to, keep it till I feel a little stronger, please. Good-night, Gwendoline, dear. How I love you, and wish every body else was like you in this cold, harsh England; then, perhaps, I could bear to live in it." With a lingering, loving embrace she took leave of her friend, and retired to her own room, which was at the end of a little corridor, and not, as usual, immediately next the boudoir.

Susan, though sincerely attached to her mistress, was not one whose feelings were easily "hurt;" but the indignation within her did not lessen to see herself in such disfavor, and Gwendoline held in such affection. It almost seemed

to her, as she now looked at her beautiful foe, that she must be a witch such as the Scriptures spoke of, who, by her magical charms, could steal even human hearts, though it was clear enough, by the expression of the waiting-maid's face, that they had not stolen *hers*.

"Your mistress has left these flowers behind her," observed Gwendoline; "I know she meant to take them with her." For such was Giulia's passionate love for flowers that a bouquet of them always stood opposite her dressing-table glass, so that she could see them double—flower and reflection, from her pillow. It was not a healthy practice, for flowers absorb the air, but "What did it signify," Dr. Gisborne said, "since they pleased the poor doomed lady."

"Stop a moment, Miss Treherne," said the waiting-maid, firmly, as Gwendoline took up the vase, and was about to follow Mrs. Ferrier; "I have got a word or two to say to you."

So far as Susan's news went—the information that she knew of her mistress's state of health, and also that Gwendoline was aware of it—her face had already betrayed it to her shrewd adversary.

"You are irritated, Susan," said she, smoothly, "because Mrs. Ferrier loves me, and chooses to show it; but it is foolish to be angry with me for what I can not help. Nor must you be annoyed with your mistress for her sharp words, for, indeed, she is far from well, and when she speaks so, it is not from harshness, but from inward pain."

This half avowal of the true state of the case was not only adapted to weaken the force of the accusation she foresaw was coming, but the long sentence also gave her time, while she was framing it, to consider how the charge could possibly have arisen. The idea, however, that her conversation with Sir Guy upon the terrace that morning had been overheard, did not occur to her.

"Oh, I am not annoyed with my poor mistress, madam; and I know now, *as well as you have known all along*, how much she suffers, and what the end of it all needs must be."

"Then you should be more careful, my good Susan, not to distress her with ill-timed remarks, such as the one to which you gave utterance just now. Rest and ease are all that are to be hoped for in her case, Dr. Gisborne says, and we should do our best to give them to her."

"That is a very wicked way of talking," retorted Susan, though not without consciousness that the remark was by no means equal to the occasion. It was unintelligible, even to her, *how* the wind had been taken out of her sails; but here they were, flapping idly against the mast, and the whole vessel of her wrath well-nigh becalmed. She had feared for the very force of the hurricane of indignation upon which she expected to be borne, and lo! it was now a matter of difficulty to her to be indignant enough. She seemed, indeed, to have been herself in fault, rather than the other, who thus talked of Mrs. Ferrier's desperate condition as though it were a thing well known, and treated by all with delicate consideration. "A very wicked way, I say," reiterated Susan, "of talking, and of acting too, Miss Treherne. It is all very well for Dr. Gisborne, who has only the body in view; but have we not all our responsibilities as regards one an-

other's immortal souls? If the grave were the end of us, your conduct might, perhaps, be excusable. Is it the part of a Christian woman—for I suppose you do call yourself that—and one who pretends to be her friend too, to let a poor doomed creature sink and sink, without even so much as knowing of her danger, into what may (for all we know) be the bottomless pit? Think of the weeks she has spent in frivolous pleasures—how you, knowing what you did, could share in them, far less propose them, I can't think; but God is your judge, not me—when they might have been passed in preparing herself, as well as she could, poor ignorant soul, for *death*. How could you do it, Miss Treherne?—how *dared* you do it? And to see you look so calm, and smile so sweet, when my dear mistress talks of getting well and strong."

"No doctor is infallible; and who knows but that she will get well," interrupted Gwendoline, in firm, unruffled tones.

"You know it!" exclaimed Susan, raising her voice and hand in protest against such atrocious hypocrisy. "You and your father know it, if no one else! To hear him wish her good-by this morning, and say, 'We shall soon meet again, you know'—as I heard him say—sent quite a chill through me. Yet even he is not so false, and not so cruel, as were you just now. To lead her on, poor soul! to dream such dreams as never, never could be realized—to flatter her with prospects of blue skies, when long before the time comes that she pictures she will be lying in the cold dark tomb, and as likely as not with her dead babe beside her—"

"Hush, fool!" cried Gwendoline, imperiously; but the warning came too late. At the half-opened door stood the very subject of their talk, with her large eyes glaring out of their deep sockets, and her thin face damp with the dews of terror. She had come back almost at once for her vase of flowers, and overheard the whole of their discourse. Doomed woman as she was, she looked far worse than doomed—half dead already—as, leaning against the doorway, she gazed from one to the other in an agony of speechless fear. The next moment she uttered a long wailing shriek (it seemed to Susan like the despairing cry of a lost soul), and before either Gwendoline or the waiting-maid could prevent her, fell heavily upon the floor.

That frightful cry aroused the house; Mr. Ferrier himself rushed up stairs, only to find his wife unconscious of his presence. They had placed her in her bed, where she lay in stupor, staring vacantly at the flowers which Gwendoline had not forgotten to put in their usual place. It flashed through the latter's mind that it might not be yet too late to conceal the peril of Mrs. Ferrier's condition from her husband, and that even she herself might be persuaded, when she came to consciousness, to believe that all she had overheard was but the product of her own disordered fancy. Might not Susan, whose intemperate zeal had certainly caused the mischief, be disposed, from fear of the consequences to herself, to accede to this course of proceeding? But a look at the waiting-maid's set face convinced Gwendoline that she could not count upon her as an ally, and therefore she at once decided upon treating her as a foe.

When Mr. Ferrier, with Giulia's cold, unan-

swering fingers clasped in his, inquired hoarsely how all this had happened, Gwendoline pointed quietly to the waiting-maid, and said: "That woman's folly has wrought it all. She meant no harm (I will say that for her even now); but she was so imprudent as to express her belief that Mrs. Ferrier would not survive the birth of her babe, within her hearing; and Heaven grant that her prophecy may not have brought with it its own fulfillment!"

"Is this true, woman?" asked Mr. Ferrier, hoarsely—not that he had the least doubt of Gwendoline's word, but because the love of justice, which was very strong in him, mechanically suggested the inquiry.

"Yes, master, it is true in a sense," said poor Susan; "but—"

"Leave this room, where you have done mischief enough, woman!" returned Mr. Ferrier, imperatively, "and never set foot in it again."

Loving fears for her mistress, and pity for her master, were filling Susan's honest heart: the sight of them before her faithful eyes—the one in a swoon, from which she might never awake; the other, haggard and sorrow-stricken, and looking already five years older since he had entered the room—overcame her utterly, and for the present swept from her mind all thought of combat with her foe, and even of self-justification. "Oh sir," said she, with passionate earnestness, "your dear wife is a dying woman; if I have unknowingly done her harm, forgive me, for it was for her poor soul's sake. For God's sake, speak to her of that, if in His mercy He again should give her ears to hear!"

"I think she had better leave the room, Mr. Ferrier," said Gwendoline, with a significant look toward his wife, into whose eyes consciousness was evidently slowly returning.

"If she does not, I will put her out by the shoulders," exclaimed Mr. Ferrier, angrily. "Go, mischievous tattler, and never again shall you see the mistress whom you have so injured!"

"God forgive you, master, as I do!" said Susan, meekly, "and keep you," added she, with a steady look at Gwendoline, "from all designers and deceivers! I have done my duty here in His sight, if not in yours."

But Mr. Ferrier heeded not her words; he only knew that she had obeyed his bidding and left the room. His thoughts were solely occupied with the fragile form that lay before him gasping painfully, but now returning the pressure of his fingers sensibly enough. Gwendoline guessed by her frightened eyes that she was holding fast to him for protection from that shadowy Pursuer, from whom there is no safety in the centre of an armed host; and even her husband was stricken with a vague dread that such was the case. "Let Dr. Gisborne be sent for instantly," whispered he.

"That was done at once," said Gwendoline, quietly. "I heard the messenger gallop off five minutes ago."

"You think of every thing," said Mr. Ferrier, gratefully.

And indeed Gwendoline was thinking of a good many things just then: how she should excuse herself, when the time for explanation should come, for not having told him of his wife's condition—how she should excuse herself to Giulia. But mainly she was endeavoring to recall her

yesterday's interview with her father, to which Susan's reference to Sir Guy had shown she had been a witness. What had she said about Piers? and how far, if at all, had she compromised herself with respect to Mr. Ferrier? Some expression she surely must have used in connection with him; or what did Susan mean by "*designers and deceivers*?" But perhaps, after all, that was only a random shaft of the waiting-maid's, loosed from the string of her tongue, in Parthian fashion, as she fled the battle.

In the mean time, her friend and hostess was agitated by far other apprehensions. Plots and plans, her simple, child-like mind had never entertained; but now it had done forever even with its harmless schemes of pleasure.

"Why do you look so frightened, dear Giulia?" inquired her husband, tenderly. "There is no one here but me and your friend Gwendoline. What ails you, darling?"

"Death! Death!" was the passionate reply that burst from her fevered lips. "It is Death I fear! It is Death I feel! They have deceived me: I shall never see Italy—never, never! I shall be lying, as Susan said, 'in the cold, dark tomb' instead, with my dead babe lying beside me!"

Gwendoline smiled compassionately: unutterable pity and sorrow seemed to overcome her endeavors to look cheerful. "Susan was very wrong and very foolish, dear Giulia," said she: "we must not take every thing an ignorant woman says for gospel."

"Gospel, gospel!" murmured the sick woman; "that is what she is always talking about. Oh dear, oh dear! Let a priest be sent for at once, Bruce—a priest of my own faith."

It would have been difficult in every sense to gratify the unhappy Giulia's desire, for, in the first place, there was no Catholic priest within a score of miles; and, in the second, she had no faith of her own, to call such, of any kind. Her father's religion, composed at best half of Superstition, half of Art, the poor girl had imbibed from him at second-hand; but her early marriage and removal to England had erased its impressions from her mind, on which, as on a palimpsest, the creed of her husband, or rather of Susan, had been since as vaguely inscribed. Her soul was shaken by Calvinistic terrors, while her thin hand was mechanically making the sign of the cross upon her bosom, and her tongue reiterating, "Send for a priest, Bruce—send for a priest."

"Dr. Gisborne has been sent for, darling," said Gwendoline, softly; and instantly a ray of comfort shone upon that troubled face.

"Thanks, thanks!" she murmured. "He is good as well as wise; he is a priest and a physician in one; and perhaps, since he is so clever, perhaps he may save me even still."

CHAPTER XI.

"I NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THE PEOPLE."

It would be painful as well as unnecessary to dwell farther upon poor Giulia's illness and distress of mind. Dr. Gisborne came as soon as the message from Glen Druid reached him, which was as quickly as the man could get to St. Medards, for that physician was not an ordinary country

doctor, liable to be called hither and thither, and always away when wanted on an emergency, but only attended a few families, and that quite as much for his pleasure as his profit, notwithstanding that his gratuitous services were ever at the service of the poor. He had guessed, from what he had gathered from the groom, that the crisis of Mrs. Ferrier's fate must be at hand, and he made up his mind to face her husband's possible displeasure—for the doctor had had his doubts of the rectitude of his own silence—for having concealed from him his wife's state of health. His satisfaction was therefore considerable at finding, on his arrival, that his favorite Gwendoline had already smoothed that matter over for him, and taken the blame upon her own shoulders. She had made the confession with quiet frankness to Mr. Ferrier himself, as they sat together watching Giulia, who, worn out with feverish excitement, had fallen into a short sleep, from which her husband was already drawing a favorable augury.

"How came that stupid woman to take it into her head that Giulia was so ill, I wonder?" said he, as much in soliloquy as in interrogation.

"I am afraid that was my fault, Mr. Ferrier," said Gwendoline, softly. "I was indiscreet enough to let her know that your sweet wife was in a very perilous state."

"Perilous you mean, of course, as respects her condition?"

"Hush! no; I wish I did. Dr. Gisborne informed me some time since that we could not hope to have her with us for many months."

"Good God! Miss Treherne, what are you saying?"

"Alas! only the truth, Mr. Ferrier."

"And why, in Heaven's name, has this been kept a secret from me, whom it concerned the most?"

"For that very reason, dear Mr. Ferrier. If any body is to blame, blame me. Dr. Gisborne was in doubt as to whether he should tell you all or not, and I persuaded him to be silent. It is not as if you could possibly have any thing to reproach yourself with. Another husband might have had moments of irritation or displeasure with his wife, for which, now that he saw her thus, his conscience would reproach him; but with you, who are all patience and indulgence, this, I knew, could never be the case. Moreover, your very love for her was such, I argued, that you could not have concealed from your darling the knowledge of the calamity that was overhanging her; and the disclosure would at once have produced the catastrophe which we see here, and which has, in fact, been brought about in the way I feared."

The rare tears stood in Mr. Ferrier's eyes as he gazed upon his fair young wife with that yearning love which we only feel when we perceive the certainty of its object being taken away from us; and the sigh he uttered seemed a farewell to all hope.

Gwendoline did not venture to breathe a word of pity; she did not even touch his arm with that slight pressure of the fingers which, in moments of sorest sorrow, may bring, if not the balm of sympathy, at least a moment's distraction of our thoughts, in the remembrance that a friend and well-wisher is by. She for once discarded the weapons of her charms, feeling that at such a

time they would win her nothing, and finished what she had to say in calm, collected tones, in which lay neither apology nor tenderness.

"I am sorry the course I thought it best to take has displeased you, dear Mr. Ferrier, but I am not surprised. When misfortune comes, it always seems that we might have been better prepared to meet it. It only remains for me now to make amends, as far as in me lies, for my trespass against you, by devotion to our dear one."

"Yes, yes; you will stay with us, Gwendoline, I know," sighed the old man; "you will not desert us in our hour of trial." She knew that he was unaware he had called her by her Christian name, but his having done so gratified her, nevertheless, as did his other words, although they also were spoken half mechanically. The one convinced her how familiar to the mind of her host her presence had become; the other how necessary she had made herself to him and his. She had not mentioned to him the second argument for silence which she had used with Dr. Gisborne, because she foresaw that he—if only in gratitude for her having taken the blame upon herself—would certainly reveal it to Mr. Ferrier; and so it presently happened.

In the long private talk that ensued, after the physician had seen his patient, between the husband and himself, the latter told the former that Gwendoline had begged him to keep Giulia's disease a secret, to save Mr. Ferrier pain. "Besides the risk of hastening the calamity—such were her very words—why make her good husband wretched before his time?"

"That was at least kind and thoughtful of her," said Mr. Ferrier; "and I am sure I forgive her from my heart. She has been a sunbeam in this house for weeks, doctor; and now that all is gloom, she seems to shine the brighter."

"And yet there are folks who say that she is cold-hearted," said the physician, indignantly, "and only cares for fashion and frivolity. I happen to know that she might have been all this time in town (and indeed Sir Guy pressed her to go thither), the idol of that world to which she is said to be devoted, but she told me that she felt her place to be here with her sick friend—as it will be, Mr. Ferrier, I am certain, until the end."

And the end was not destined to be very far off. After giving premature birth to a little daughter, poor Giulia passed out of the world, for which she was so little suited, with a gentle smile. Her terrors had all departed, and with her last breath she whispered to her husband that she saw her dear Italy before her, and that she was going there after all. Her affection for Gwendoline seemed to have met with some sudden check, for she neither caressed nor addressed her. She gave no explanation of this change in her feelings, nor did Mr. Ferrier, rapt in his great grief, observe it; and it was Gwendoline who ministered to her to the last, and whose arms raised little wondering Marian to the bedside to take her mother's farewell. In one particular only did Mr. Ferrier show himself not utterly overwhelmed with the fact of his bereavement—he was resolute in his determination to dismiss Susan Ramsay, at whose door he persisted in laying the catastrophe, or, at all events, the hastening of

it; and with characteristic firmness he paid her what was due to her with his own hands, and, as it happened, in Gwendoline's presence.

Susan, dissolved in genuine tears, had not a word to say in mitigation of her master's wrath; she was not thinking of herself at all, for indeed farther service was no object to her, but only of her dead mistress and of her darling Marian, from whom it grieved her deeply to part.

"Is that your just due, woman?" inquired Mr. Ferrier, sternly, putting her money, with the extra month's wage in default of warning, into her hand.

"Yes, sir; and I thank you for all your kindness," sobbed Susan. "I have only one favor to ask you more—that I may see my dear dead mistress once before I go."

"Never!" said Mr. Ferrier, vehemently. "That shall be your punishment. She forgave you; and I, for—yes, I forgive you, and that is enough."

"Oh sir," cried Susan, "anger should not last beyond the grave; and I did love her so; pray let me."

Mr. Ferrier's iron face relaxed; her unexpected tears and tone were softening him.

"If my intervention may have any weight at all, dear Mr. Ferrier," said Gwendoline, appealingly, "I pray you, put it in the scale of mercy. I entreat you to let this faithful, if mistaken woman have her wish."

Susan drew herself up quickly, and her black eyes flashed through her tears. "I am speaking to my master, miss, and want no grace from you, nor never shall."

"Excuse me, Miss Treherne," said Mr. Ferrier, angrily, "but I can not suffer your unfeeling kindness to be thus abused. Not another word, I beg. And you, Susan, you insolent, coarse woman—whom I shall not stoop to tell how this honored young lady has spoken on your behalf before—leave my house at once; and never darken its doors again."

So Susan Ramsay, in disgrace, betook herself to St. Medards, to dwell for the present with Mr. Sam Barland's mother, not only until such time as the bans could be put up, and their little arrangements made for marriage, but for a consid-

erable interval in addition, which Susan insisted upon, as a mark of respect to the memory of that dear mistress of whom she had been so harshly forbidden to take farewell. And to this arrangement Mr. Samuel Barland, who was a philosopher as well as a man of science, unresistingly assented.

The news of the catastrophe at Glen Druid was carried, in black-bordered missives, to no numerous yet to widely different circles. To Miss Judith Ferrier, the widower's only sister, for instance, who had her habitation in her native Glasgow; and to Sir Guy Treherne, who had his lodgings over his club, on the shady side of Pall Mall. Also to the Honorable Piers Mostyn at Stonegate Hall, Yorkshire, whom it reached in rather a strange fashion.

The rest of the men who were staying in the house had gone hunting that morning, but he himself, being more a squire of dames than a fox-hunter, was starting for a ride with two of the ladies, when the post arrived, and brought him a letter addressed in Gwendoline's hand. He had had no word from her—although she had promised to keep him acquainted with her movements—since that night of his dismissal from Bedivere Court; and he opened the envelope with enough of agitation to make the keen eyes that were slyly watching him twinkle with merriment. Could Sir Guy be dead, and had she written, in her loneliness and poverty, to say that she would wed him, as he had pressed her to do? There was not a line of her handwriting within, but only two slips, cut out of a Cornish newspaper. "*On the 24th inst., at Glen Druid, the wife of Bruce Ferrier, Esq., of a daughter.*" And culled from the death column of the same paper the following: "*On the 25th inst., Giulia, the beloved wife of Bruce Ferrier, Esq., of Glen Druid.*"

Piers Mostyn muttered an oath beneath his breath. Confound the girl! What did she mean by sending him that sentimental rubbish, as though this dead woman had been her dearest friend? Of course she only did so as an excuse for her long silence; but she was foolish, indeed, if she supposed that such a subterfuge would impose upon him. "The Ferriers of Glen Druid? Why, I never even heard of the people."

THE RIPENING.

CHAPTER XII.

GWENDOLINE TELLS PAPA.

THERE is no occupation in which (to honest eyes) a young girl looks so attractive as when she is ministering to the happiness of children; and this is more especially the case when those children have no protectress of their own. Gwendoline, although retiring nightly to Bedivere Court, passed her days, as before, at Glen Druid, devoting herself to little Marian and the baby, with the former of whom, at least, she filled, and more than filled, the place of her dead mother; for the late Mrs. Ferrier had not really possessed the stamina requisite for the performance of the duties of head of a family, far less of a great household; and the widowed husband, despite

his grief, could not help observing how much more smoothly matters were ruled under the new dynasty, than when the "exotic," as poor Giulia had nicknamed herself, was mistress of his house. If it had not been for the children, Gwendoline would not, of course, have had the shadow of an excuse for revisiting the place after her friend's death; but their motherless condition was for the present her warrant, while they themselves afforded always a subject of conversation with her host, and the means of escape from all embarrassment, if, indeed, she ever felt any.

A tranquil sigh or two over the fate of the bright flower which death had snatched from them, and a few words of eulogy, or modestly tendered counsel, regarding the small tenants of the nursery, were all that Gwendoline herself

ventured to utter at their solitary meals; she initiated no other topic whatever; but after a time, Mr. Ferrier began, as usual, to converse with her upon business matters, and with greater frankness than ever. In particular, he talked to her with perfect unreserve concerning his property, which she learned, without surprise, produced an income of nearly thirty thousand pounds a year. He was not by nature addicted to horse or carriage exercise; and since the neighbors had not been very congenial with his late wife, he had kept much at home, so that he had already been thrown into Gwendoline's society far more than is generally the case with host and guest of their respective ages; and now, when he was restricted by his recent calamity more than ever to his own roof and grounds, there was scarce an hour in the day that he passed out of the comforting sunshine of her presence. Nevertheless, Mr. Ferrier could not rid himself of scruple with respect to Gwendoline's tarry at Glen Druid so easily as she did. Respectability was an important part of his religion, and to outrage it was in itself a species of blasphemy, in which, however pleasant, he could not permit himself to indulge. Moreover, there was Gwendoline's own reputation to be considered. Of course, the idea of any thing unpleasant or malicious being said of her had never entered into her innocent head: wrapped up in the memory of her dead friend, and in her devotion to those left, but for her own tender solicitude, to a hireling's care, she had never given a thought to what the world might say; it was therefore all the more incumbent upon him to lay before her, as delicately as he could, the true state of the case; a difficult duty enough, since, in the first place, it required rather tender handling; and, in the second (although he did not know it), Gwendoline had fully made up her mind to misunderstand him. The arrival, however, of a letter from his sister at Glasgow gave Mr. Ferrier the long-looked-for, though scarcely long-desired, opportunity of unburdening his conscience upon this matter.

"My dear Miss Treherne," said he, "I have been thinking as to whether it would not be advisable to ask Judith to come and stay at Glen Druid."

Gwendoline opened her large eyes, and with a smile, almost the first which she had yet ventured to wear, replied: "I am most pleased to hear it, Mr. Ferrier. It seems a pity you should be so long estranged from your only living relative; and, to say truth, I had always entertained an idea that there was not the cordial feeling between you—though I am sure that fault does not lie with one so kindly as yourself—which should always exist between brother and sister."

"Nay; Judith is an excellent woman in her way, though she is somewhat narrow and prejudiced in her views. We always got on together very well—until of late years."

"Is it possible, then, that she could find any thing amiss with your poor lost darling?" said Gwendoline, with innocent indignation.

"Not 'amiss' exactly, for that, as you hint, would be impossible. But Judith has always lived in the North, and among her own people; she had a sort of horror, I fancy, of all foreigners, and disapproved altogether of my marriage."

"You did not ask her leave, however, I suppose?" said Gwendoline, again smiling.

"No, indeed," returned Mr. Ferrier, with a flush upon his grave, shrewd face. "I have, throughout my life, been my own master in all respects. But my union with Giulia produced a coolness between myself and Judith. You, however, who have such tact, and—and—who make yourself so pleasant to every body, would find no difficulty, I am sure, in getting on with my sister: she is a little stiff and formal, but she has really a good heart, and—and—"

"My dear Mr. Ferrier," interrupted Gwendoline, quietly, "you may be quite certain that I should do my best to be courteous and respectful to any one so nearly related to yourself as the lady in question. I could easily forgive her any such defects as you mention; and would very gladly submit, for your sake, to any wholesome reproof with which she might please to visit my unregenerate self. But what I can not forgive—and if I could, what I could not be able to forget, so that it must needs (I feel) influence my behavior toward Miss Ferrier, in spite of myself—is her dislike of my sweet friend, your late beloved wife. I quite understand the course of training, and the social associations which may have caused your sister to regard Giulia as she did; it may not have been her fault at all, but only her misfortune, yet I can not—indeed I can not—in justice to that dear memory, consent to treat as my friend the woman who so misjudged her."

"I really don't know what is to be done, then," said Mr. Ferrier, doubtfully. "I was in hopes you might have contrived to get on with Judith; and I scarcely see, unless she comes here, how—I really think it would be advisable—" He stammered and hesitated, and for the first time to Gwendoline's eyes, his rugged features wore an appealing and almost tender look. She instantly perceived that his proposal to invite his sister was mainly suggested by the idea that she herself might not only retain her present position at Glen Druid without impropriety, but be more constantly there even than before; and her heart beat with triumph to learn it. Her tone, however, was quiet and cold enough, as she replied: "I can not understand your difficulty, my dear Mr. Ferrier. There is surely no sort of reason why you should not invite your own sister to Glen Druid, especially now the innocent cause of her displeasure is no longer here."

Mr. Ferrier paused, and bit his lip. Gwendoline was purposely taking the course most calculated to make Judith intolerable to him: she had another shaft, too, in her quiver yet, and the time had come for her to let it fly. "There is certainly one objection to Miss Ferrier's coming," said she, musingly, "though it hardly becomes me to mention it, and I must ask you to forgive me the liberty, for the sake of the motive that prompts me to take it. Your darling Marian is growing of an age to understand the feelings as well as the mere spoken words of those about her, and it would cut your loving heart to the core, sir—for I leave my own purposely out of the question—if you should have cause to think that your daughter should be learning to despise her mother. I know from Giulia's own lips that Miss Ferrier was wont to regard her at the best—as a papist and a foreigner—with pious horror. Do you think it certain she may not inspire the child with similar feelings? Marian has a most loving,

but also a most impressionable nature; and, for my own part, I have done my best to guard it from receiving the thought of harm—the idea of contempt for any body; but another and more strongminded teacher might soon undo my poor lessons.”

“My dear Miss Treherne,” exclaimed Mr. Ferrier, earnestly, and as he spoke he rose and took her hand in his, “I can never forget your kindness to me and mine. It would indeed be a sad loss to all of us—all that are left, that is, and to my little ones in particular, should your kind face cease to shine upon us at Glen Druid. But, perhaps, if you were to consult Sir Guy upon the matter, he is so perfectly conversant with all that the best society exacts or expects—”

“Oh, I see!” ejaculated Gwendoline, with a low musical laugh. “How very, very stupid you must have thought me, Mr. Ferrier! I have, I now understand, been setting at defiance the opinion of the world in being so much at Glen Druid. The fact is,” added she, with a sadder air, “my world has been limited of late to those two little ones above-stairs, and—and—to yourself, Mr. Ferrier.”

“I know that well, my dear Miss Treherne,” said the old man, with emotion; “and Heaven knows how unwillingly I have performed my duty in thus drawing your attention to what, in itself most innocent and laudable, may yet possibly set in motion the tongue of vulgar scandal.”

“Vulgar scandal, my dear Mr. Ferrier,” said Gwendoline, haughtily, “does not affect me very seriously, though I thank you for your warning, and appreciate it. I would bear far more, for the sake of you and yours, than the knowledge that the good people at St. Medards have expressed an opinion adverse to my discretion. I could undergo the reserve of its banker’s wife, and the cold shoulder of its attorney’s daughter, and yet survive.” It was impossible to conceive a more graceful shape of scorn than Gwendoline exhibited as she pronounced those words with a sweep of her stately arm, in the calm contempt of which it almost seemed that Mr. Ferrier himself was included.

“It is very natural, my dear Miss Treherne,” said he, hastily, “that you, being what you are, should despise such people and their possible talk. I only hinted at the matter because I saw that it had never entered into your mind—as, indeed, why should it do so? But it really would be a relief to me—since I could never forgive myself if your devotion to my little ones should expose you to the shadow of an imputation—if you would lay the matter before Sir Guy as I have ventured to put it before yourself.”

“I will do that, my dear Mr. Ferrier, and in person; for papa, whether influenced by the same motive as yourself I know not, has, in this very note, written me to say that he is shortly about to return home.”

“But why should he not come *here* instead of to Bedivere Court?” pleaded Mr. Ferrier. “Why should you not both come here, and stay as before? It would be so kind of you to take pity on my loneliness; and—little Marian would be so pleased.”

And thus it happened that Sir Guy and his daughter became once more located at Glen Druid, nominally as guests, but without any definite limit to the duration of their visit. Every

thing was made as pleasant for the old baronet as could be contrived. He had had his doubts about coming to stay at a place where any thing so unpleasant as death had recently occurred, and was pleased to express his approbation at the “good sense” which characterized the chief mourner in abstaining from all allusion to the topic. Sir Guy looked upon the great calamity as a careful housewife regards a spot upon her carpet or her curtains—something to be erased, if possible, at once and altogether; but, that failing, to be carefully kept out of sight, and never hinted at. And these precautions were taken at Glen Druid with respect to its deceased mistress. No allusion to the melancholy topic was ever made in his presence; he ate and drank of the best; he rose and retired when it suited him; the resources of the establishment were placed as much at his own disposal as though it had been his own. But after a time he began to get tired, as usual, with even so favorable a specimen of country life, and to pine for the pleasures of Piccadilly. This was excusable, or, at all events, natural in Sir Guy’s case; they were the only pleasures, and, indeed, the only pursuits that he had ever known; and though they were less vivid than they had used to be, in the absence of any other magnet they were still attractive. The course of a selfish voluptuary toward its close is—with the substitution of one kind of work for another—in many respects similar to that of an agricultural laborer. The latter, with feebler powers, has to toil on at precisely the same work to which he so vigorously applied himself in his youth; his trembling hands still wield the spade or the hoe, although the return for his labor has become so lamentably small: he knows no other thing to do. And so the ancient man of pleasure continues in his scarcely less narrow groove, enjoying less and less, but still doing his best to enjoy. Now Sir Guy, although he disliked all mention of the fact, was secretly aware that old age was creeping upon him, and that he had not much time to waste in admiring, or pretending to admire, the picturesque in Cornwall. He had arrived at the epoch when every year brings with it a change that is felt in *loss*, and it was most important to utilize what faculties yet remained to him. It would be time enough, when every capacity for pleasure was exhausted, to lie and stare at the sky and the sea. But it was difficult to express these sentiments to another with the perspicuity with which they presented themselves to his own mind, or, indeed, to express them at all without incurring an imputation of egotism beyond what even he was prepared to bear. He proceeded, therefore, to attribute his resolution to depart to the importance of time to his daughter, and the necessity of her repairing with him to London for her own sake. Moreover, he was not without his suspicions of the part she was playing in respect to their host, the widower, and he willingly seized the opportunity of discovering how far they were correct. Thereupon, one bright warm day in early spring, upon that terraced walk on which Gwendoline had informed him of the approaching death of their late hostess, Sir Guy and his daughter had a second conversation together, only the latter took care that it should be on this occasion without an eavesdropper.

“I have been thinking a good deal lately of our

stay here, Gwendoline," said Sir Guy, a little clumsily, for she purposely offered him no chance of gliding imperceptibly on to this topic, "and, upon my life, I think it ought to come to an end."

"Do you think we are outstaying our welcome, papa?" inquired she, coldly. "Don't you get the same wine that you liked so much at first?"

"My dear Gwendoline, what a vulgar notion! Of course every thing is as it should be in that respect. To do Mr. Ferrier justice, whatever money can buy—down here—he places at my disposal: his domestic expenditure, in fact, is princely; but I suppose his income fully justifies that;" and Sir Guy gave a sharp glance at his daughter.

"He has nearly thirty thousand pounds a year, papa; he told me so with his own lips."

"Indeed! That is a large rent-roll, or, rather, it is something better, for I fancy his fortune is invested in more valuable securities than fields and farms."

"Yes; it is mostly in government stocks, and could be realized (if he wished to do so) to-morrow. Mr. Ferrier has told me all about it."

"So it seems, my dear," said Sir Guy, significantly. "But, however rich our host may be, he is not a man to neglect his children. The channels which his wealth will flow in hereafter are already marked out; so that, in my opinion, Gwendoline, you are wasting valuable time by staying down here."

"I think not, papa." Her tone was quiet and distinct, and the gaze with which she met Sir Guy's impatient glance was as steady as her tone.

"But I tell you you *are*," urged he. "It is not only that you are losing here all opportunity of securing a suitable position in life, but you are also in some sort compromising yourself. I hinted, you know, by letter, at the inadvisability of your being here so much after Mrs. Ferrier's death; and even now, though I am with you, our making so long a stay at Glen Druid must needs certainly provoke remark."

"I will take the risk of that, papa. Thanks to your frankness months ago, I thoroughly understand my own affairs; I have looked at the situation from all points, I assure you."

"Do you mean to infer, Gwendoline, that the opportunities which a London season might afford are no longer of any consequence in your eyes—that you have made your plan in life altogether independent of them?"

"Just so, papa."

He understood her at once, and, upon the whole, he was not displeased. Out of so large a fortune as Mr. Ferrier's, there would doubtless be pickings for himself, as well as ample provision for his daughter; but yet so high was the opinion that he entertained—and justly—of the effect of Gwendoline's charms, that he could not help feeling that they might have been disposed of elsewhere to even still greater advantage.

"It is, as you say, your own affair, my dear Gwendoline," mused Sir Guy—"quite your own affair. But, of course, I, as your father, can not but feel a very deep interest in this matter; and it does strike me that your ambition is somewhat easily gratified; that you might have looked a little higher."

She smiled, and raised her eyebrows a hair-breadth.

"There is nothing objectionable in Mr. Ferrier, it is true," he continued; "he is a gentleman, and knows how to behave himself. But are you sure, my dear Gwendoline, you are quite suited for the sort of humdrum life which, as his wife, you must needs lead? Without the least offense to his excellent abilities—and they tell me he is a first-rate man of business—does it not occur to you that our amiable host is just a trifle dull? He will not get brighter, Gwendoline, as time goes on, remember that; and he is already, for a husband, an old man."

"Yes, he is an old man," said Gwendoline.

The phrase was a mere reiteration of her father's words, but it was uttered in a tone of great significance. No other word was added; and Sir Guy, on his part, did but nod his head, to let her know that he quite comprehended her meaning.

CHAPTER XIII.

PIERS MOSTYN BECOMES RESTIVE.

IN accordance with the perfect mutual understanding which existed between Sir Guy and his daughter, and which is said to be so great a desideratum in those relations, not another word was hinted of the former's return to town. For the sake of his child, almost as much as for any profit that might accrue to himself out of her contemplated plan, the good baronet determined to make a sacrifice of the pleasures of the London Season. He may have been, and probably was, impatient in secret, but externally he was imperturbable. He listened to Mr. Ferrier's anecdotes of his early struggles after fortune with a calm despair, that the narrator took for admiring wonder, and heard with genuine interest the twice-told story of his success, for, in the fruits of the latter, he felt that he might have some share. He even, on one occasion, honored with his presence the institution of family prayer; this condescension, however, was a failure, nature and art (in Sir Guy's legs and trowsers) having equally incapacitated him from kneeling, while devotional monotone at once superinduced repose. The domestics trooped out of the room in suppressed hysterics, while Sir Guy, with his face buried in his chair, was in the land of dreams.

Whenever his daughter had had a few minutes' talk alone with their host, poor Sir Guy would cast a covert glance of inquiry toward her, to know whether all these sacrifices had met with their reward, or if he was still doomed to suffer on. But, although Mr. Ferrier had as fully made up his mind to propose to Gwendoline as Gwendoline had to accept him, those ideas of respectability, with which no amount of fortune will permit men to dispense unless they have also been brought up in good society, delayed the declaration month after month. It was almost time enough—taking the conventional "year and a day" as the correct limit—for the widower to marry again before he ventured to offer himself in marriage.

The proposal was made in characteristic terms. He did not allude to his advanced time of life, to the disparity between their respective ages, at

all; but he told Gwendoline—and quite truly—that, however strange it might seem, she was the only person who had ever inspired him with what he imagined to be Love. He had loved his late wife, he said, in the sense that most persons could be content to accept the word, but he had never experienced in her case those feelings of respect, admiration, and worship which were actuating him now. And yet he confessed that, even thus, he would have forborne to declare himself, did he not feel that in doing so he was endeavoring to secure for his two children the kindest and wisest guardian they could ever hope to know.

And Gwendoline's reply, though she was very careful not to wound the old man's *amour propre*, dwelt upon the children also, to whom she modestly hoped she might prove herself a nearer and dearer relative than what is commonly suggested by the term of step-mother. There was as little of protestation or appeal on the one side, as there was of coyness or hesitation on the other. The upshot of it all took none in the household by surprise, and scarcely any one in the neighborhood.

When Sir Guy and his daughter departed for their own house, it was taken as a sign by all the county that Glen Druid would presently become more their home than ever.

There was a certain letter dispatched from St. Medards to Glasgow the next morning describing the matter as fully settled, and not at all as mere common report.

"MY DEAR MADAM," it ran, "the engagement of which I have always written to you as certain to happen between your brother and Miss Treherne has at last taken place. I am myself surprised that she did not cause him sooner to forget my poor dear mistress; though it is early days enough for him to think of wedding again, goodness knows. It seems but the other day that he sent for me, on your kind recommendation, to be her waiting-maid at Glen Druid. Well, well, it is not my good master's fault; she would hoodwink the sharpest eyes that ever *man* wore—though she never hoodwinked mine. Heaven grant it may not turn out to be his misfortune! The wicked Sir Guy took his daughter back with him yesterday—until I suppose the marriage takes place—to Bedivere Court; else they have not been there, except for a day or two at a time, for months. For my part, I call such goings-on scarcely decent, but then I am only a poor person, who, it seems, is not fit to be a judge of what is right among people of quality. That is what my husband says, and one is bound to believe one's husband.

"In communicating this sad news, according to your request, directly I heard it, it is only right to add that all the folks at Glen Druid are agreed that Miss Treherne behaves well enough to the dear children—that is, *at present*. My sweet Marian was certainly very fond of her; but the fact is, she comes over every body, man, woman, and child, and, if folks were served as they deserve, would be burned as a witch. There's Mr. Alexander Blackett of the Glen, for one, is said to be ready to shoot himself because of this news; his sister, who is a very proper-minded lady, actually called at our shop for medicines for him to-day; and yet Miss Treherne can certainly never have given *him* much encouragement. But then a smile from her goes further with the men than"

(here some words had been carefully erased in the manuscript, and the following written over them)—"than the most excellent gifts and pleasant discourse in another. Ah! madam, and that reminds me how I envy you in Glasgow, with such great opportunities of hearing the truth from persuasive preachers; we have none such in this graceless place; and I doubt whether Mr. Ferrier has done much good in paying for the ministry. The last tracts came safe enough to hand, but I could not do much with them. The door here is not yet open wide enough. I blush to say that with the *Smoker's Fate* my husband lit his pipe. What good, however, might you not effect by coming down hither in person! I suppose Mr. Ferrier will bid you to the wedding. I can think of nothing else than that; all my thoughts come round to it again, whithersoever they wander. When time and place are arranged, you shall hear without fail, dear madam. Yours respectfully, SUSAN BARLAND."

This was not the first letter by many that Susan had written to her old patroness and fellow-countrywoman since her summary dismissal from Glen Druid. With all her faults and prejudices, Susan had an honest heart, which nourished no bitterness against her late master, and a most passionate affection for little Marian. Her mind was thoroughly made up as to the character of Miss Treherne, and not the most eloquent preacher in North Britain could have persuaded her to take a different view of it.

Miss Ferrier was not, upon the whole, displeased to learn that her brother had fallen the second time a victim to woman's wiles; it served him right for not having had his sister to live with him, who understood scheming hussies of all kinds so thoroughly, and would have protected him from their arts. The fact was, however, that Mr. Ferrier and Judith had dwelt under the same roof together (though not at Glen Druid) for some years, until the latter, with her strait-laced ways and acid religion, had fairly driven him from it to Italy, and (as it happened) to Giulia. Perhaps the foreign painter's daughter had even proved more attractive to him from the complete contrast which she afforded to the honest and kind-hearted, but severe and oppressive Scotchwoman. Judith was one of those uncompromising social despots who are always causing, or, at all events, precipitating, domestic revolutions, and yet remain totally unconscious of their own folly: they lay all the fault at the door of the rebels, whom they accuse, as Charles I. did, "of impatience of taxation;" and protest that, "for their part, they have nothing to reproach themselves with; and if the time came round again, they should behave precisely the same"—which indeed they would probably do. It is these well-meaning but impracticable folks—with their opposites—who make one sometimes think that the devil has stolen not only "all the best tunes," but all the best manners, tastes, and tempers also. It was curious, but also very characteristic, in Judith Ferrier, that notwithstanding she had received from Susan such an unflattering portrait of Gwendoline, she spent several afternoons in driving about her native town in triumph to inform her kinsfolk and acquaintance that Bruce was engaged to be married to an English baronet's daughter, who had been the belle of a London season. Perhaps,

however, it was to recompense herself for the silence she had been compelled to keep with respect to his first wife, concerning whom and her antecedents she could only close her eyes and hold up her hands.

All unconscious of the interest which she was thus exciting in the great Northern city, Gwendoline was sitting at home calmly receiving the congratulations of her friends. The first step of her proposed life-journey—or rather of the introduction to it—had been safely accomplished, and her future was secured. Under such circumstances, one might have supposed she would have rested carelessly on her oars a little, and drifted easily down the stream that was bearing her to fortune. But she was not at all at ease, and very far from without care. While her friends were felicitating her upon the coming event, and even her father was complimenting her on the success her prudence had achieved, she felt by no means sure of victory. At this supreme moment, when she had written him word that her proposed plan—or, as she wrote it, “our plan”—was already bearing fruit, the patient Piers had turned restive and dangerous.

The Honorable Piers Mostyn was neither better nor worse than many men of his class, while in appearance he offered a favorable type of it. He took the same pains in his personal adornment and effect as any of them, and he had excellent native material to work upon. He was really a very handsome, if somewhat effeminate-looking young gentleman, to begin with, and he was always faultlessly attired. What he would have looked like in corduroys and a bad hat—what would have become of all that *distingue* and aristocratic appearance *then*—can never be known. He never wore corduroys nor a bad hat. He had a very engaging smile, though it was only fascinating, and not genial; an insinuating address, and a musical voice devoid of drawl. But, except in attire and manners, he owed nothing to “the long result of time;” the centuries behind him “like a fruitful land reposed,” but they had borne no fruit, save in the above particulars, for him. He had no knowledge, no tastes (to be called such), no acquirement whatever, beyond the French language, which he spoke easily, and with a good accent. What his feelings might have been under more favorable circumstances can never be known; all his moral machinery had been “brutalized” very early, and was now hopelessly out of gear. Although but the younger son of a poor peer, he had breathed the incense of flattery from his cradle. He had been toadied at Eton by boys whose fathers had sent them thither with that especial purpose; he had been sighed for (and had not denied them) by scores of young women of the middle class. The radicals, who pretend that an hereditary aristocracy is no better than any other section of the community, are in this the unconscious flatterers of the very class they would decry; for if those born with “handles to their names” contrive, held aloft from the first by social sycophants, and exempt from the rubs of the world, to grow up to manhood as no worse than their fellow-creatures, that itself were a considerable feat, and would argue much in favor of the hereditary principle.

The Honorable Piers Mostyn had not been hitherto fortunate in making pecuniary profit out

of his prefix; he had moved in somewhat too elevated circles; but he had a well-founded idea that he had only to show himself (with his card pinned to him) on the next *plateau* of society, to secure a wife with a suitable dower. At present, he had only received his share of “that gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy,” the Diplomatic Service, and the income thence derived had been wholly insufficient for his needs. These last were on a scale commensurate with his hereditary position. His passion for gambling was intense, but he now had, unfortunately, not even a stake to risk; he had spent his patrimony of five thousand pounds in that pursuit, and already owed as much again for his necessary expenses. For the Honorable Piers Mostyn could not be maintained (nor did his country expect it) at the usual charges of an untitled gentleman; he was a fancy article, and was well aware, if the worst came to the worst, that he could fetch—in the matrimonial market—a fancy price. In the mean time, he was madly in love. Of course we do not use that term in the vulgar sense; it was not that sort of sentiment that takes up the harp of life, and “smites the chord of self, which, trembling, fades in music out of sight.” Far from it. A more thoroughly selfish being than Piers Mostyn had become at two-and-twenty could scarcely be found, even among his own frivolous and pampered class. Nor was his passion of that sort which monopolizes its possessor, to the exclusion of other female objects of devotion. Among his Eastern friends in Persia, it was the custom to marry a score or two of ladies, and yet reserve one as the queen of the harem; and our youthful diplomatist emulated their example, as far as the more stolid institutions of his native land permitted. Gwendoline Treherne was his queen of the harem, and he adored her above all the rest. Her love for him was not only grateful to him as a lover; it flattered his vanity in a very high degree; for it was quite on the cards that Gwendoline might have been a duchess, had she directed her marvelous energy, and unrivaled charms to the attainment of that end. A marriage with her, even now, would have invested him (for a fortnight or so) with considerable interest; the world (*his* world) would have talked about it unceasingly, until some other occurrence of an equally enthralling character turned up; but then, unfortunately, one can not live on *éclat*.

Marriage with Gwendoline had been always impossible, but flirtation with her had been by no means less pleasant upon that account—quite the reverse; there had been even a *souppçon* of impropriety about it; it had been almost like making love to somebody else's wife. And now that she was absolutely engaged to be married, her fascination for him was greatly increased. The case of the man who adored pork, and wished he was a Jew, in order that he might have the additional pleasure of sinning while he ate it, is not altogether an exceptional one. When one has no other pursuit than pleasure, innocent delights soon begin to pall; when the appetite is jaded, one takes to sauces *à la tartare*—to sherry and bitters. Vice, of course, is pleasant to every body; but when it comes to be pleasant because it *is* vice, matters become serious, and require the attention of the clergy. At present, however, the Honorable Piers Mostyn had scarcely reached this point, and we are perhaps doing

his training an injustice in attributing such a fruit to it so early. With all his heart—with all the dregs of what he had left in him in the way of sentiment—he really did love Gwendoline Treherne. If it had been possible for him to have made any sacrifice whatever for the sake of another person (which it was not), he would have done it for her. He had not seen her for a whole twelvemonth, and he was now resolved to do so. He had suffered enough (he wrote) during that enforced estrangement, and he must bear the music of her voice once more, and feel the soft clasp of her hand. What possible harm could there be in that, even in the eyes of Mr. Ferrier? He had been very good and obedient to her hitherto: this one interview was a very small reward for his patient submission to her will, and he would have it.

Gwendoline was equally resolved that he should not have it. Her will was vastly stronger than his; but, on the other hand, his easy disposition would now and then, she knew, indulge itself in an outbreak of willful obstinacy with which it was very difficult to deal. Who has not experienced the sudden whims of a weak nature, and seen the ruin they have wrought in the plans of a stronger? And Gwendoline's plan was now threatened with such a catastrophe. She could not make Piers understand Mr. Ferrier's nature—and indeed it had cost her months of assiduous study to learn it herself—nor dispossess him of the idea that his attentions to her would be considered by that respectable personage in the light of a compliment to himself. The old merchant was phlegmatic—not quick of observation, and conventional, as we have seen, in his views of society; but his respect for rank would never have induced him to forget his respect for himself. His ideas of right were fixed and absolute: he was not a man to be trifled with by any body, and least of all, she felt, by a professional trifler like Piers Mostyn; for she was not less qualified to judge of Piers because his interests and her own were one. It was by no means unlikely, in short, that the latter's appearance at Bedivere Court might be the destruction of that social edifice of which she had with such infinite pains just laid the foundation, and she determined by all means to avoid an interview with him. At the same time, she could scarcely feel angry with her lover for conduct which, after all, was suggested by the love he professed, and which she herself reciprocated seven-fold.

"I forbid you to come to Cornwall," wrote she, with earnest vehemence; "and if you come, I will not see you."

"I must come, however, and shall at all events see you," was the infatuated young gentleman's reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PUBLIC CEREMONY.

It had not been Gwendoline's habit to mingle much with the society about Bedivere Court. She had not had many opportunities of doing so, for Sir Guy detested country amusements and (so-called) gayeties, and of course she could not partake of them without his escort; moreover, there had been hitherto nothing to be got by them. But now that she was engaged to be

married to a gentleman of the county, matters were very different. It was absolutely necessary that she should make herself popular in the neighborhood of her future home, not merely for the sake of being well received as Mrs. Ferrier of Glen Druid, but for ulterior reasons of a much more important kind. In the scheme of life that she had planned out for herself, the good opinion of the world, and especially that of her neighbors, must by all means be secured, and as large a fund of it laid up as possible, so that when the time came she might be able to draw upon it for charitable excuses and a liberal construction of her own conduct. Sooner or later she would have to present the checks, and it was well to make arrangements as early as possible for getting them honored. She never shut her eyes to the difficulties of her position, however far away they might lie, but did her very best from the first to smooth the way beforehand. It was pitiable indeed that so astute and prudent a general should be liable to disgrace and defeat, through the ignorant impetuosity of such an ally as Piers Mostyn.

However, notwithstanding his rebellious rejoinder to her last letter, she thought, upon the whole, he would not venture to force upon her that foolish "just one" interview, which she felt might not alone be dangerous in its consequences, but would shake her own resolve to its foundation. She was too proud and too wise to tell him that but the fact was she could not trust herself to see him while it was yet possible to become his wife. It was hard enough to have to feign respectful affection for Mr. Ferrier, to have to receive with smiles the congratulations of his friends, to have to enter with apparent interest and pleasure into plans for a future that she looked upon with contemptuous aversion—it was hard and bitter enough to have to do all this in presence of the recollection of the man she loved with such intensity of passion; but to see him again face to face, to speak with him, to press his hand, and perchance his lips, and then to turn away with smothered sigh, and the full consciousness of the contrast, to become the wife of Mr. Bruce Ferrier until death should them part, was an ordeal from which she shrank with shuddering. Had the case of herself and Piers been reversed, she would not perhaps have hesitated to place him in the same position; but then Gwendoline was a woman, and would have done so to triumph over her coming rival, whereas Piers Mostyn's design had only his own selfish willfulness to excuse it.

Sir Guy and Miss Treherne, then, were now become much more sociable than their neighbors had hitherto found them to be, and the fact that they were so gave quite an impetus to the county hospitalities. Mr. Ferrier was of course an invited guest on all these occasions, and it was more than once remarked what an earnest, anxious glance his beautiful bride-elect would throw round her as she entered such scenes of gayety, as if to see if her future lord was there. The observers were correct enough in their data, though not in their conclusions. Gwendoline never joined a picnic, nor an archery-party, without casting one hurried, anxious gaze about her, to make sure that Piers Mostyn had not carried out his threat, and sought her presence there. She had made up her mind what to do even in such a case: she would have taken his hand and welcomed him as

an old friend, and as such introduced him to Mr. Ferrier. But could she rely upon herself to execute her own intentions? In her secret heart she did not think she could; and hence it was that to keen spectators (such as happily "the county" did not afford) her face would seem to have worn not only anxiety on such occasions, but positive terror.

It was arranged that her marriage should take place in London; and as the autumn waned, the county gayeties, though of course they now mostly took an indoor shape, increased, until they became an almost unbroken round of farewell festivities, which it was well understood—without the least reflection on Cornish hospitality—would be returned with interest when the bride and bridegroom came to reside at home. There was still one outdoor *fête*, notwithstanding the inclement season, in connection with the great Glendallack copper-mines. The board of directors were mostly gentlemen of the county; and the completion of a tramway from the surface to nearly a mile under the sea had been the excuse for a great dinner and ball at the mansion of one of the largest shareholders. The ceremony itself was not without local interest, and attracted a vast number of spectators from St. Medards and other places, for hitherto the mine had been worked only by the usual method of levels and ladders; and the introduction of a wheeled carriage into its subterranean depths was an event in its history. It was understood that some of the ladies of the neighborhood, including Miss Treherne, would condescend to use this novel conveyance; but when they came to look at the vehicle in question, and the road which it had to travel, the determination of most of them gave way. Imagine a tramway descending across the face of a bleak cliff at an angle of forty-five degrees; for a hundred yards or so, the sheer crag was on one side, and on the other—with no sort of wall or guard—the winter sea; beyond that was what looked like a small black hole, through which the vehicle disappeared, to finish the rest of its journey in pitch darkness beneath the cliff and the ocean. A princess, as courageous as charming, has achieved the adventure of late years, but at that time no member of the female sex had ever visited the dark depths of Glendallack; nor was it to be wondered at that they shrank upon this occasion from the steep unprotected way and the black portal.

The car, as it was euphuistically called, was by no means an attractive equipage. It was a small carriage, or rather truck, of solid iron, which would hold with comfort—if such a term be not totally out of place—six persons, two and two, sitting very close behind each other. It was let down and pulled up by means of a stationary engine working an endless chain. Most of the fair visitors had, of course, expected to find a first-class saloon railway carriage, and a level road agreeably lighted up for their convenience; and it did not tend to promote their confidence when they were informed that the car fitted almost as closely into the tunnel before them as a bullet in a gun, so that they must not move hand nor foot while passing through it. Lastly, it was necessary to put over their fine clothes certain garments, very considerably made for the occasion, but still neither elegant nor becoming. As for the gentlemen, they were pro-

vided with regular miner's attire. Under the circumstances, out of the dozen fine ladies who had come to Glendallack with the expressed intention of going down in the car, and who saw the preparations made for their descent in presence of an admiring throng, ten unhesitatingly declined to make the venture. They were very sorry, they said, to disappoint the public; but the public would survive it, whereas they felt confident they themselves never should. When pressed, they took a still more dignified attitude, and refused upon the ground of religious principle. It was all very well for persons whose business lay in such places to go down there twice a day after tin and copper (or "whatever it was"), but in their own case, they felt it would be "tempting Providence." In vain it was urged that it was a wrong view to take of that beneficent power to suppose that it is always ready to do us an ill turn when it catches us at a disadvantage; they had no wish to argue the matter, they replied, but they would stay above ground, and out of harm's way.

Gwendoline alone, and Miss Blackett, expressed their intention of carrying out the programme; an announcement that was received with enthusiasm by the public at large, and with solemn head-shakes and doleful warnings by their recusant sisters. It was a most dangerous and foolhardy adventure; and if Mr. Ferrier had been there (which on this particular occasion he did not happen to be, but was closeted with his lawyer at Glen Druid), they were sure he would never have permitted Miss Treherne to undertake it. As for Miss Blackett, "she was old enough to know better;" or, indeed, some did not hesitate to whisper that the idea of getting a beau all to herself, on whom she could lean and confide throughout the journey, was so attractive a bait to that excellent but somewhat ancient maiden lady, that it had overcome her fears. We do not venture to say whether this was or was not the reason. She averred that she went solely to take care of her brother, who was infatuated with Miss Treherne, and had foolishly constituted himself her escort. But in the case of Gwendoline, the possible danger of the trip was itself the chief attraction; she welcomed any excitement, because it prevented her from dwelling upon her own thoughts, and the more strange and stirring it was, the better it pleased her.

It was amid great cheering that the two ladies, having retired into the manager's house to put on their dress, reappeared upon the platform *en costume*, and were presently followed by the similarly metamorphosed gentlemen. With respect to Gwendoline, whatever she put on anew seemed to become her best. She looked as though that tight-fitting flannel gown and solid wide-awake had been donned expressly to enhance her charms, and a buzz of involuntary admiration greeted her as she stepped with a quiet smile whither the car was standing ready for departure. If her companion's personal appearance had not similarly improved, it, at all events, had not suffered much damage. But that of the male adventurers was sorely deteriorated. The expression "Nature's gentlemen" has probably no reference to costume; otherwise, we must deny its application, even to the most noble-looking of mortals, when rigged out in a suit of

coarse white sailcloth, and surmounted by a solid round hat, with a tallow-candle stuck in the brim.

The company who were to make the first trip consisted of six persons, arranged in the following order: in the first seat, Miss Blackett and a Mr. Kerr, of St. Medards, were to place themselves; in the second, Miss Treherne and Mr. Blackett; and behind were the brakeman and a guide for the underground passages. There was no room for any one else; but the narrow stone steps that ran by the side of the tramway into the mine, and which had hitherto formed the only mode of ingress and egress, were crowded all along, down to the very mouth of the tunnel, with workmen. Poor Mr. Blackett, who, compared with his energetic sister, might have been almost said to be the less masculine of the two, nervous, dyspeptic, and quite unaccustomed to publicity, exhibited at this supreme moment, just as the car was about to move, a truly pitiable spectacle. He was devoted, in his feeble sentimental way, to Gwendoline (who was aware of his existence, and that was all), and in an evil moment of chivalrous enthusiasm he had volunteered to be her escort down Glendallack; but he now bitterly repented himself of that hazardous undertaking. He shuddered, not so much from the nipping and eager air which the wintry sunshine could not warm, as with the terrors of the prospect before him. The steepness of the incline; the roaring and dashing of the sea immediately beneath him, and into which it seemed as likely they would slide off as not; the small black hole into which they had presently to enter, and that looked scarcely large enough to accommodate the car even without its inmates; and the unimaginable terrors of the mine itself, appalled him. As he sat staring blankly before him, with two tallow-candles stuck in his hard round hat, he looked like some badly executed patron saint in wax, to whom a poor but pious neighborhood had devoted their dips without conciliating him. At the very last moment, he suddenly jumped up, and made an effort to get out of the car. He had already adjured Gwendoline not to persist in going down the mine, and protested, with all the eloquence which truth inspires, that for her sake he would give up the adventure without a pang of regret; and she had quietly announced her intention of going through with it. He had washed his hands, therefore, of all responsibility—so far as she was concerned—and had nothing to consult but his own precious personal safety. A roar of disapprobation arose when his intention was discovered: there was a moment of indecision, in which he seemed to Gwendoline (who mercifully averted her eyes) to get out and get in again, and the machine began to move slowly down the incline.

It really was a nervous moment: to the tenants of the car it seemed as if they were gliding into the sea itself; and Miss Blackett clung to Mr. Kerr as though he was *her* patron saint, and should be propitiated whether he would or not. But, after the first moment, Gwendoline began to enjoy it; the roaring wind, the leaping spray, the black rock in front, that seemed to yawn for those that were about to explore its secrets, seemed to string her nerves and stir her blood. For the first time in all her life she recognized what it was to be face to face with the great powers of

nature; vigorous of mind and strong of will though she was, her whole existence had hitherto been artificial; her intellect had never been braced by one broad thought; she had been hemmed in by convention from her cradle, and no yearning to escape from its dull round had ever visited her. What all her life had been, now suddenly contrasted itself in her mind with another sort of life, of which she had only read. How would it be with her now, had she always passed her days with honest simple folk, who lived mostly in the open air, amid such sights and sounds as were now about her?

"Oh well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!"

some poet had written, and those words came back to her with a far other and deeper meaning than they had ever had before. "Would it not have been well for *her*, if, instead of the life she was now living—outwardly so gay and pleasant, but inwardly one net of fraud and lies—a life in whose atmosphere she never seemed to draw one natural breath—" The car had already glided under the little tunnel, into warmth indeed, but total gloom, a type of the very existence which she was picturing; but ere she could continue her reflections, a hand was lightly laid on hers, and a voice which she well knew, and which thrilled every fibre of her frame with anger, and joy, and fear, whispered "Gwendoline!"

CHAPTER XV.

DOWN GLENDALLACK.

At the same moment wherein Gwendoline became conscious that Piers Mostyn, and not Mr. Blackett, was sitting beside her in the car, the machine was suddenly brought to a full stop for the purpose of lighting the candles, which, in the open air, would at once have been extinguished. Even when all were provided with these beacons, they did little more than make the rugged roof immediately above them visible, and cast a feeble glimmer upon the wet walls. When Miss Blackett turned round to ejaculate "Horrible; is it not, Alec?" she would not, perhaps, have discovered that Alexander had decided upon limiting his conquests to the earth's surface, and had left the guardianship of her friend to another; Piers, not knowing what line to take, remained silent, but Gwendoline replied promptly for him: "Your brother is not here; he was afraid of catching cold, I suppose."

"Oh, I see; one of the workmen has taken his place. Well, perhaps it's better so, my dear. You will be in safer hands, for Alec is quite unfitted for these sort of expeditions: I told him so when he proposed it. Oh my goodness! Mr. Kerr" (and she gave her neighbor a most genuine squeeze), "if we ain't going lower still!"

Considering that they had only just entered the mine, this was not to be wondered at; but the fact was, as poor Miss Blackett subsequently observed, "she had seemed to have passed a lifetime in the dreadful place already," and could do nothing throughout the journey but pinch Mr. Kerr and say her prayers. Her attention and that of her companion being thus entirely absorbed, Piers and Gwendoline were left to converse almost as freely as if they had been alone,

except for the brakesman and his assistant, who had other matters to engage their minds.

"How dare you come here, Piers?"

"Because I love you, dearest. Orpheus went down to a similar locality—to see his wife; and I have come here to see you. I really could not resist it, my own darling."

Gwendoline did not withdraw her hand from his warm pressure—she could not deny herself so great a pleasure; but her tone had much resentment in it still, as she replied: "It was a most dangerous and foolish thing to do, Piers. Does any one know of your being here?"

"Not a soul save the brakesman behind us, and he does not know who I am. I said I wished to go down the mine, and they gave me this dress, and bade me wait for the next car. If 'Alec' (who's Alec?) had not got out, I should have come down the ladder, and taken my chance of seeing you. How beautiful you look with that star upon your forehead, like a goddess."

"Do I? I can not return the compliment: Miss Blackett took you for one of the workmen."

"Bless her. So will every body else, I hope. I wish I was a workman; that is, if you were also employed on the same level. I could travel to the centre of the earth like this, and enjoy it beyond every thing."

"Could you?" Gwendoline was pouting; but he missed that from the insufficient supply of light. "Then you can not be much devoted to scenery."

"I see your face, darling, and that is the fairest scene to be beheld upon earth—or beneath it. Confound it! we are stopping again. These people will insist upon our going to look at something."

Never was explorer of mine so easily satisfied as Piers Mostyn. He would have been content to have been lowered through scores of miles of mere tunnel, and then dragged up again. He wished to see nothing but the face beside him—to hear nothing but that voice, which was certainly growing less resentful, and even almost tender toward him. But science is a severe schoolmistress, who has no patience with such ridiculous follies, and must be listened to whenever she speaks. The brakesman's assistant had had his orders to "explain Glendallack" to the distinguished visitors of the day, and he conscientiously did it. It was like hearing a lecture at the Polytechnic. But never had those instructive walls contained so unheeding an audience. Miss Blackett was otherwise engaged, as we know, and could not listen. Mr. Kerr had shares in the mine, and knew all about it. Gwendoline was staring straight before her, looking (if there had been light enough to see) haggard rather than bored; she almost wished that the rope would break, and the enigma of her life be solved in that fashion. Piers, beneath his silken mustache, was muttering curses in the Parisian tongue. The brakesman's assistant having premised that he was unaccustomed to speak in public, discoursed with a fluency that could only have been acquired by constant practice. He had himself a smattering of science, and had invented something—a pump, or a valve, or a coupling-chain—of which he had a model at home, and would be happy to show it to the ladies and gentlemen when they got above ground.

"Ah! if ever we do," sighed Miss Blackett.

She was a thrifty soul, but she would have given ten golden guineas at that moment to have been in a position to behold the model referred to. Happy Alec! He was a coward, but not a fool; he was on *terra firma*, and not under it. How she hated Mr. Kerr, who must have known where he was bringing her to! Heaven might forgive him, but she certainly did not make that special request in his favor. Why was it so frightfully hot, and what was that which was dropping on her head and shoulders from the roof? She interrupted the torrent of the lecturer's eloquence to ask these two questions.

"Well, mum, as for the heat, that is said to arise from our propinquity to a very hot place, indeed."

"Great Heaven deliver us!" exclaimed Miss Blackett, fervently.

"No, mum; it is not the place you are thinking on: I was referring to the Central Fire. The warm air we are breathing, however, although inconvenient to parties unaccustomed to it, is not hurtful. As for the iron drippings, they are quite harmless."

"But what do they come from, man?" urged the poor lady.

"Well, they come from the sea, mum: we are half a mile out or more under the waves. The faint hollow boom you would hear—if you were to listen very quiet—is the noise of the sea above your head."

"Just so, my man," said Mr. Kerr, with the patronizing tone of a proprietor. "Now, will you tell us how many feet of rock, in the roof here, lie between us and the water?"

"Well, where you are pointing, sir, about six feet; but where that wooden plug is put, not above three. If I was to knock it away this moment—"

An agonized cry broke forth from Mr. Kerr. "My dear Miss Blackett, you ran a pin into me!"

"I know I did," exclaimed that lady, with the calmness of despair, "and I'll do it again if you don't make that man leave off, and instantly take us up again. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for bringing ladies into such a place at all. The idea of one's trusting to a wooden plug? I am sure I have turned quite gray within the last five minutes."

If Mr. Kerr had had any action at law brought against him by the lady, on the ground of this personal damage to her charms, it is possible he might have produced witnesses to prove that she was turning gray some time previous to her descent into Glendallack; but he was much too gallant as well as prudent to hint at any thing of the sort just now.

"My dear madam," answered he, "I assure you there is not the slightest danger. People are working all along yonder gallery, and do so every day, just as safely as though they were digging potatoes in their own gardens: nobody gets so far as this down the mine without leaving the carriage and going to see them. We must take back with us some memento of our visit, in the shape of a bit of tin or copper ore. Come—let me give you my arm—and see the specimens hammered out with our own eyes."

"I don't move one step out of this car for all the wealth of Golconda; and you don't either, Mr. Kerr," added Miss Blackett, hastily: "I

am not going to be left alone in this place for a single instant. What do you say, Miss Treherne? You have had enough of these dreadful proceedings, I am sure; no young woman with any sense of propriety would wish for any more, with the candles all guttering down as they are, and not likely to last a bit longer than we want them to do."

"I am quite at your service, Miss Blackett," said Gwendoline, quietly. "It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether we remain or return."

"Then let us go back at once, man," exclaimed Miss Blackett.

"Just as you please, mum," returned the brakesman's assistant. "Only, if you won't go to the workings, you will never be sure that the specimen you buy above ground was really found here. But I'll just knock you down a lump or two from the roof—"

Again a cry of irrepressible agony broke forth from the unhappy Mr. Kerr. "This confounded woman—that is, I mean this lady here," said he, correcting himself, "is exceedingly timid, my man. Give the signal to draw up at once—*immediately*—do you hear me?"

"I am sorry if I have hurt you," said Miss Blackett, reserving her apology until the machine began sensibly to ascend; "but I really couldn't help it; I would have done the same if it had been the lord lieutenant."

"I wish it *had* been the lord lieutenant, madam, with all my heart," returned Mr. Kerr, viciously, and continuing to rub his leg, for the pin had, this time, hurt him exceedingly.

Nature is often complimented upon making so many folks, and yet none of them (save her twins) altogether similar in feature; but the variety of character with which she dowers us is infinitely greater. Even twins are sometimes of totally opposite dispositions.

The little car that was now toiling up from the depths of Glendallack was bringing what auctioneers call "a very mixed lot" to join their fellows above ground. That Mr. Kerr was of the same flesh and blood as his companion, she, indeed, had proved to his great inconvenience; but beyond that they had scarcely any thing in common. He was a gambler in railway and mining shares, and speculative even in his religious opinions. She was prudent and orthodox, but devoted to sixpenny loo, from which he shrank, as being an immoral dissipation. The brakesman, again, who had been specially imported from a distance on account of his great gifts in his particular line, was almost as much a machine as the invention he controlled and admired as the perfection of human skill; while his companion and assistant was a Brunel in embryo, dissatisfied with every mechanical institution as ineffectual, and only not guilty of ruining railway companies with his ingenious novelties, because the opportunity had not as yet been afforded him.

"The applause of board-room meetings to command, The threats of loss and ruin to despise,"

his lot forbade; but he yearned to wade through treasure to the throne of chief engineer, and to shut the gates of Economy on the British shareholder.

Like the ham of the sandwich, Piers and Gwendoline, between these two differing pairs, *most certainly partook of the qualities of neither;*

nor, perhaps, though they had a common interest in life, which the others lacked, were their characters, on the whole, more similar.

"I am glad to have seen you, and pressed your hand, dear Gwendoline, at all events," murmured Piers. "This must last me for some time, I suppose."

Passionately as Gwendoline loved this man, it was perhaps a part of her punishment for doing so that her keen eyes were not closed to his faults—that is, to those shortcomings, which, measured even by the moral standard which *she* used, were faults. She well knew that he was inordinately selfish; but that phrase of his, "last me," just as she was about to part from him on the cross-road of life, sent a chill to her very heart. Her silence, and the sudden relaxing of the fingers which lay in his grasp, at once informed him of his error.

"Dearest Gwendoline," continued he, tenderly, "do not think me selfish, for you and I—as it seems to me—are one. When far away from you, I have only the recollection of you to comfort me; I seem but half myself, and that the worse half. When—when may I hope to see you again?"

"I do not know, Piers; perhaps never. I wish that I could die this moment—thus, with my hand in yours." She was dreadfully agitated; she was trembling in every limb for the love and the loss of him, and he knew it.

"No, no, dearest; you shall live on. We will be happy together yet; do not doubt it. When—when are you coming to town?"

"Papa and I go the beginning of next month. Mr. Ferrier follows us, with the children. The marriage is to take place on the 20th."

"And I am not to see you betwixt this and then?"

"Certainly not, Piers. If you have one single spark of genuine love for me, you will avoid me, not only betwixt now and then, but for months to come. We shall be in Italy for a long time. I will write to you, but you must not write to me. It is a small thing enough to ask of you, Piers, in return for much; but will you promise me *that*?"

"I will, dear; I do. But you will think of me; you will not forget me, Gwendoline?"

"Forget you? No, Piers. Ah me!" (she muttered to herself) "would to Heaven I could!"

"You are shivering, dearest; I trust this confounded place has not given you cold. I feel the draught myself; we must be getting near the daylight. I do not say good-by, darling—*au revoir*."

Their hands parted with a tender squeeze, and not a moment too soon. The candles began to pale, the gloom to thin, the fresh salt air to make itself felt. Amid the sound of beating waves, and blowing winds, and cheering human voices, the car was drawn up to the platform whence it had started. An immense crowd welcomed their arrival; among whom, though modestly keeping in the second rank, were Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Barland, the latter of whom always made a point of patronizing all entertainments that were gratuitous.

"You are looking rather white, Miss Treherne," said Mr. Kerr, as he assisted her to alight. "I trust you were not as frightened as Miss Blackett; though, if you were, I am sure you

behaved yourself better. Hollo! what has become of your friend? Brakesman, here is something for yourself, and for your assistant also; and although, as it happened, there was nothing for him to do, here is a couple of shillings for the other workman. He has mixed with the rest, and I can't tell one man from the other; but you will see he gets it."

None present had the slightest suspicion that Gwendoline had gone down Glendallack with Piers Mostyn sitting by her side. Mrs. Barland, however, did remark, as her husband and herself trudged home together that afternoon, "Yon was a bonnie laddie that took Mr. Blackett's place by Miss Treherne, eh? Did you ever see him before?"

"I dare say," was Mr. Barland's careless reply. "There's a matter of six hundred men as works at Glendallack, and most of 'em comes to our shop when their insides wants looking to. You're a nice young woman, *you* are, to be so curious about 'bonnie laddies,' and only a six months' bride yourself! I am downright ashamed of you, Susan." But he did not look ashamed of her by any means, but regarded her, head aside, with complacent criticism, as an investment with which he had every reason to be satisfied.

"Nay, it wasn't so much his bonnie face that took me, Sam. But I thought it unco strange that he should have flitted away without staying to get his siller from Mr. Kerr."

Mr. Samuel Barland's philosophic face relaxed into a smile, and his gray eyes twinkled with merriment, as he tapped the ashes out of his pipe, and observed approvingly, "It's plain ye come from the far North, Susan."

CHAPTER XVI.

GOLDEN OPINIONS.

IN a few weeks, Bedivere Court and Glen Druid were both occupied only by servants on board-wages. Sir Guy and Gwendoline, and Mr. Ferrier and his children, were all in town. The baronet and his daughter took quiet lodgings in St. James's Place, but communicated with none of their fashionable friends. The bridegroom elect knew scarcely any one in London, and of course passed most of his time with the Trehernes. When Marion and little "Eady" (which was the general love-term for Edith) accompanied him, they did not find themselves at all *de trop*, as usual in such cases; and, indeed, Gwendoline gave them a very genuine welcome. Their presence was an immense relief to her, though Mr. Ferrier naturally enough did not take that view of the matter, but admired her more than ever for her devotion to his little ones. He even spoke of it with enthusiasm to Sir Guy over their claret, and thereby afforded that acute gentleman an opportunity, as he thought, of diplomatically introducing a certain delicate subject.

"Yes, my dear Ferrier," said he, "it is evident enough that Gwendoline adores your motherless little ones; and, indeed, although she has generally great command over her feelings—as the Trehernes have always had—she can never speak of them to me without emotion. Do I conjecture right in supposing that you will appoint her—

who will certainly be their natural protector—their legal guardian?"

Mr. Ferrier's cheek flushed up a little; he was never quite at his ease with the baronet, and shrank from giving him the least offense. Moreover, the suggestion just made to him had, it was probable, been proposed to her father by Gwendoline herself, which rendered a refusal still more embarrassing. But, for all his affection for his bride elect, which was excessive, and of that devotional sort which is scarcely seen save where there is great disparity of age, Mr. Ferrier did not hesitate in what he felt to be the path of duty. He was liberal, and even lavish, notwithstanding Mr. Samuel Barland's remark on folks from the far North; but he always remembered to be just before he was generous.

"No, Sir Guy," said he, firmly; "I can at present make no prospective arrangement to that extent. The disposition of my little ones must, like that of the bulk of my property, depend upon the future." Then, for the first time, he unfolded to his father-in-law elect his pecuniary intentions with respect to Gwendoline. It was a matter on which the baronet had wisely abstained from questioning him. Mr. Ferrier was a man much easier led than driven, and would have resented any dictation upon such a subject. Business matters were his strong point; and, on the other hand, he did not need to be told his duty. His intentions on the present occasion were what suited both with his natural liberality and his sense of right, though they by no means came up with Sir Guy's expectations. Mr. Ferrier had arranged to supply Gwendoline with a handsome allowance for pin-money, and to settle on her a good jointure; but he had no idea of materially injuring the prospects of his children. Moreover, he might have issue by Gwendoline herself, whose interests would have to be consulted.

The baronet could not altogether conceal his chagrin at this news; and if he had spoken the genuine feelings of his heart, he would have said something of this sort: "It is not to be supposed that an ancient and third-rate personage like you, sir, can purchase so superior a being as my daughter for the same price, or any thing like it, as a more eligible suitor. The least you could have done, in my opinion, would have been to settle half your property upon her; the other half would, even then, have been more than sufficient for your girls, and probably only made them the objects of designing fortune-hunters. Out of that you might, therefore, reasonably have given me (Sir Guy) a good lump sum, not in mere acknowledgment of my rank (for that, since we are to be so nearly connected, I waive), but in compensation to me for what I have expended on this young woman's education and attire, and various extras. I really do not see the good of the existence of people of your third-rate class at all, if we are not to make something out of you; and if I had only guessed what a faint sense you entertain of the honor done to you in this alliance with my family, by gad, sir, I would have taken my pig to another market."

What Sir Guy did say was something very different. He remonstrated, it is true; he even took the serious and sepulchral line of his being an old man, and of the necessity incumbent on him of "looking beyond himself;" but either because he was out of his element on such topics, and

argued it ill, or because, since the bridegroom elect was as old as he was, the argument was ill appreciated, Sir Guy failed to move the other from his position; and finding no better terms could be made, he dismissed the whole matter with a good-humored pleasantry.

In very different tones did he communicate the news that evening to his daughter, when their guest had left. He did not spare his future son-in-law, even in the way of epithet: "The man is a mere skinflint, Gwendoline; and, for my part, I am quite prepared to throw him over, even at this eleventh hour. You have only to write a line to Lady Beaumonde, to say we're in town, and next week you may take your choice among the best in England. Depend upon it, my dear, we have made a mistake here altogether."

"I think not, papa," was Gwendoline's quiet rejoinder; "at least, I have made no mistake." And a look accompanied the reply, which said as plainly as any spoken words, "You know it was arranged that I was to shift for myself."

Sir Guy seemed much cast down; abashed, it was not in the nature of things he should be.

"If you have nothing to do with yourself, papa," she went on, "or if I have put you to expenses that cripple you for the present, why should you not accompany us abroad?"

"What! on your marriage? On Monday week, Gwendoline? Surely that would be impossible."

"Would it?" said she, coldly. "Well, at all events, join us as soon as it *will* be possible. I will take care that Mr. Ferrier asks you to do so; and one of us, at least, will be glad to see you."

Gwendoline was speaking truth there, and her father kissed her with trembling playfulness for her gracious words. He did not guess that almost any body else would have been as eagerly welcomed to make a third in that coming honeymoon as himself.

"Yes," said he, "I will certainly make one of your party, notwithstanding that I understand those brats are to accompany you; and you know how children annoy me."

"Marian, however, is a very well-behaved little girl, papa, and nobody will ask you to carry the baby. Paris—Florence—Rome; that is the programme, it seems; and we are to return to Glen Druid in the early autumn."

She traced out the route as coolly as though she had been reading an extract from *Bradshaw*; and we may state, without accompanying the happy pair upon their travels, as Sir Guy did, that it was adhered to.

Mr. Ferrier was not "thrown over" at the eleventh hour, but married Gwendoline Treherne on the day appointed. Never had so quiet a wedding taken place before at St. George's, Hanover Square. The fashionable world were astonished the next morning over their chocolate to read the news of such a ceremony having been performed in their absence, and rather resented it. "But when a girl marries for money," they charitably reflected, "it is the bridegroom's wishes that have to be consulted until after he is secured." They had no idea it was Gwendoline herself who had insisted upon the "quietness" of the affair. That there were no bridesmaids, no breakfast, no any thing, was all set down to the miserly eccentricity of the unknown Scotch

gentleman of eighty or so (some said ninety), who had purchased the belle of the last season. There was one thing in which it was sarcastically observed that he was very generous: the fashion of "no cards" had not as yet commenced; but the number of cards which the Ferriers sent out quite excited remark, it was so prodigious. No acquaintance of the Trehernes—and their circle of acquaintance was very large—seemed to have been omitted. But this too, in reality, was as little to be laid to the bridegroom's charge as the rest of the arrangements. The bride was solely responsible for it. In doing so, she was sowing the seed of what she intended should be a vast harvest of popularity; she was casting bread upon the waters, of which she hoped to see the fruits after many days.

In most dramas, when the heroine marries, the curtain falls with "They lived happy ever afterward" inscribed upon it, or at least suggested by the last "tag;" but the story of Gwendoline Treherne can admit of no such conclusion. She is married, it is true; but her life henceforth is no more to be predicated from that circumstance than is the future of a man who takes the name and arms of another by the queen's license, for certain considerations, is to be thereby foretold. With most women, marriage is the scheme of their existence, the capital of the column of life. With Gwendoline Treherne it was but the first step of the pedestal.

Early in autumn, and after about six months of continental travel, Mr. and Mrs. Ferrier and the children returned to Glen Druid. It is sarcastically said that country folks have little to talk about except politics and one another; but so far they are little behind the town. The misfortune is that they take their politics from tradition, or yesterday's newspaper (which is much the same), while they themselves are few in number—and—since it is only poets and fox-hunters (of whom the latter class is much more numerous than the former) who *can* live in the country—mostly of one type. The return of the Ferriers was an incident by the side of which all ordinary excitements of the neighborhood—confirmations, family bazars, and comings of age of the sons of the magistracy—paled their ineffectual fires. The curiosity of the county to see Gwendoline, and pass judgment on her behavior as wife and step-mother, was extreme; and she did not balk them. The newly-married couple went out every where; and when that duty had been thoroughly performed, they received every body at home. Nothing could exceed Mrs. Ferrier's urbanity and good-humor. Society could not reproach itself enough for having once thought her unconciliatory or reserved. How true it was that one should never pass hasty verdicts upon persons whom one has had no opportunity of knowing thoroughly! What was more satisfactory than all was to see how sweet little Marian clung to her. It was not always that a young woman of beauty and fashion showed herself in so amiable a light with respect to the whims and ways of children, and it was rarer still to see a second wife so entirely devoted to the offspring of her predecessor. Conversation of this sort took place for the most part among the ladies, and was generally followed by certain significant smiles and whispers, the nature of which are far too polite to reveal. Indeed, they chiefly consisted of orac-

ular and mystic sentences, not easy to be deciphered by masculine minds at all; such as, "Nothing of the sort at present;" "Quite a mistake, I assure you;" and (this from a high domestic authority, who had just been made a grandmother), "Pooh! pooh! not likely."

From reproaching itself with its old verdict upon Gwendoline, Society went on to reverse it. For what besides her cold and haughty manner—which it was now evident had been but the natural result of high birth joined to very slender means—had ever been really urged against her? Absolutely nothing, except some vulgar story about the sudden and harsh dismissal of her waiting-maid from Glen Druid. The girl was a great talker, had made some bitter complaints, and even invented some scandals against her mistress before she went away; but if one is to listen to the tattle of discharged domestics, what mistress's character would be safe? And, talking of servants, could any thing be more admirable than Mrs. Ferrier's conduct—it was but a small thing, but it was very significant of her magnanimity of character—with respect to Susan Ramsay that was, who had been turned away from Glen Druid for her impertinence to her, when Miss Treherne? One of Mrs. Ferrier's first acts upon her return home was to send little Marian down to St. Medards to see her old nurse, which not only showed a forgiving spirit, but proved how genuine had been her own affectionate treatment of the child. For of course the artless infant would pour into Susan's greedy ears all her woes and wrongs, if she had had any, and give quite an unvarnished account of her new mamma. Yet even Susan Barland—who was very well known among the families in the neighborhood, for she was an excellent dress-maker, and eked out her husband's income by that calling—had confessed that little Marian was very fond of her step-mother, and had nothing whatever to say against her. It was surely a great feather in Gwendoline's cap that she nourished no "bitterness," which so often exists in people that ought to be far above it. Then, again, to see her with the baby—little Eady—it was the most charming sight in the world: the clergyman at St. Medards had said it was "an education in itself;" never had such a step-mother been seen before—at all events in West Cornwall. If Gwendoline had been dead and buried—a calamity shocking to reflect upon when one remembered those two motherless lambs—the gilded record of virtues upon her tombstone, which would doubtless have been as complete as the art of composition could make it, could scarcely have been excelled by the golden opinions that were now expressed of her.

As to her behavior as a wife, it was perfect—it was beautiful. It was agreed upon all hands that never before had old man been so fortunate in the choice of a second spouse as Mr. Ferrier. It was also remarked that he was looking very old.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GARDEN PARTY.

It was not only the county that was bidden to the hospitalities of Glen Druid. Gay London

folks, friends of Mrs. Ferrier and her father, came gladly down to lounge on the broad terraces, and play croquet on the lawn or on the sands of the bay. At the end of his earthly pilgrimage, Mr. Bruce Ferrier reaped the reward of a lifetime of assiduity in having more than one live lord a guest beneath his roof. Lord Chillington, an old college friend of Sir Guy's, was so good as to promise a week of his valuable time to the honest merchant, which was prolonged to a month by a sharp fit of the gout. He was a very polished and stately ornament to a drawing-room, and celebrated for his curious anecdotes of the days of the Regency—which he regretted with genuine pathos. His fishy eyes would twinkle almost like life when recalling those times when he and Sir Guy had so often heard the chimes at midnight—and would also have heard them had they rung at four in the morning. He had much more courtly manners than the baronet, but also distinctly showed the Tartar if you chanced to scratch his skin. Dr. Gisborne and he had once an argument together upon a small question of matter of fact—the subject being the famous *Perdita*—wherein his lordship was proved decisively to be in the wrong; and he lost his temper to that extent that his scientific adversary had to bleed him; notwithstanding which good office, he went about for the short remainder of his life complaining that he had been asked to sit at the same table, down in Cornwall, with a confounded apothecary. Lord Luttrell also honored Glen Druid with his presence, accompanied by his brother, the Honorable Piers Mostyn, "Both very old friends of mine and of your wife's, Ferrier, and whom I have known ever since they were so high," was Sir Guy's introduction. Mr. Camellair, the distinguished artist, and one or two more of his fraternity, were also of the company; he had come down expressly to paint Mrs. Ferrier—the portrait was afterward engraved for the *Book of Beauty*—but when his mission was done, he still staid on, enraptured with the effects of light and shadow on the Warrior's Helm. He was also partial to the Steinberg and Green Curacoa, both of which were of better quality at Glen Druid than those in his own cellar at St. John's Wood. These artists were to Gwendoline what aids-de-camp are to their chief in time of peace: they took messages for her, anticipated her wishes for a water-ice, caught her laced handkerchief in the very act of falling (such was their nimble grace), and invented small-talk for her for the dinner-party in the evening. When they were so fortunate as to secure her private ear, and could resist the temptation of abusing one another, they paid her tender compliments. "She was Snow, but had never fallen," said the cleverest of them.

There were London ladies, too, guests at Glen Druid, who should by rights have been mentioned first; but the presence of Lord Chillington obtruded itself upon my mind, and monopolized its attention. There was a Lady Chillington somewhere in lodgings at Bath, but nobody knew any thing about her beyond the card-circles of that faded city, where she lived in great repute, however, upon five hundred a year, which his lordship allowed her out of her own money; for she had at one time been an heiress. There was also a Lady Luttrell, who accompanied her husband and brother-in-law; but she was proclaimed

"unsatisfactory" by most persons of her own condition. She was undeniably pretty, but she had no "style." It was understood that she was of a religious turn, which perhaps explained the cold, discouraging look with which she received even the best of Lord Chillington's "remimiscences," when the rest of the company were all appreciation. Even if their tone was a little free, it would have shown a more Christian spirit in her, it was observed, to have been more complacent in her reception of them, considering that he was a peer of the realm and of an age to demand respect. With this exception—which was, it must be allowed, however, a very grave one—she was civil to every one, down to the very servants; yet the company complained that "somehow or other they could not get on" with Lady Luttrell. She had "nothing to say for herself," and took every thing people said to her *au grand sérieux*; and they wondered openly how Luttrell "stood it." That good-natured viscount removed his habitual cigar to laugh at this idea; assured them that his "Kitty" was worth the whole lot of them, Chillington included; and expressed his belief that when the time came—and his constitution was already what he called "shaky"—and supposing what the parsons said was true, he should get to heaven by her vicarious aid. "She is so deuced good, bless you, she'll frank me right through, just like a post-letter."

To do the viscount justice, it was not in view of this prospective advantage to himself that he allowed his wife to take her own way in life—to visit the poor, to tend the sick, and to teach in a Sunday-school. He was not nearly so clever as his younger brother—he was even a downright fool to smoke ten cigars a day when one gave him the heartburn—and he knew it; but he had sense enough to perceive what made his Kitty happy: perhaps his conscience pricked him that in one or two particulars he had done much to make her unhappy, and this was his atonement, that he let her take her own way. At all events, she did so at Glen Druid; she rather avoided the half dozen fashionable couples that made up the other guests of the Ferriers, and passed much of her time, by Gwendoline's permission, in the nursery with the children—of whom, though passionately fond, she had none of her own; her brother-in-law, Piers, was heir-presumptive to the title of Luttrell. She had rather taken to Miss Blackett, and had more than once driven into St. Medards to join her upon certain charitable errands. But Dr. Gisborne was not a favorite of her ladyship: the freedom of his freely expressed opinions had shocked her; while, on the other hand, the doctor had been heard to say that Lady Luttrell was the only one of the "London Lot"—as he somewhat contemptuously termed Mr. Ferrier's metropolitan guests—that was worth her salt. He compared her (but much more tersely), in Miss Blackett's private ear, to a single flower growing among a wilderness of weeds upon a hot-bed of inodorous material.

The "London Lot" and the "County Lot" (except the very cream of the latter) did not, to say truth, blend together very harmoniously: the former had the advantage of union and compactness, besides that of better understanding the (polite) art of war; they discussed together, very unreservedly the characters of the less favored guests

who had just taken leave, and were being whirled away for miles over the windy moors before they got to their beds; their own position afterward gave them almost that superiority over the others which those who are invited to dinner possess over those who are asked to "come in the evening." Perhaps it was not altogether without reason that the families of the neighborhood accused them of giving themselves airs. But, nevertheless, nobody dreamed of refusing an invitation to Glen Druid, where the hostess certainly did her very best—and, upon the whole, not unsuccessfully—to persuade the oil and vinegar to coalesce. Not a day was suffered to go by without an entertainment of some sort. There were dinner-parties, dancing-parties, and acted charades, in which last it was the universal regret that Gwendoline declined to appear. Mr. Ferrier had not expressed any objection to her doing so, but with delicate tact she had anticipated his view of the matter, and pleased him by abstaining from taking part in them.

She had won Lady Luttrell's respect, too, by that prudent course, and the two sat close together one entire evening, talking more familiarly than usual about Marian and Eady, and how the fishermen's families got on in stormy weather. The quiet beauty of the viscountess afforded an exquisite foil to the imperial charms of Mrs. Ferrier; and they were both much admired; but it was admitted on all hands that there were many Lady Luttrells in the world, and only one Gwendoline. The latter wore a careless smile, although she endured ten minutes of agony while she watched Piers Mostyn, as Pyramus, make love in dumb-show (but with great naturalness) to one Miss Beauvoir as Thisbe.

Besides these evening gayeties, there were often entertainments in the daytime—fêtes and garden-parties. On one of those occasions, Susan Barland, who was now dressmaker in ordinary to Marian and Eady, had been asked by the former, with Gwendoline's permission, to take tea in the nursery. It was the first time she had visited Glen Druid since her dismissal, almost two years ago; and how different, thought she, was the scene before her, as she wound along the path that led to the back of the house, and gazed through the tall hedge of sea-tamarisk upon the terraced gardens, to that which she had left about the house of mourning. A band of music, hidden in the grotto, was playing some lively air, and the fountains were leaping in the sun as if to the melody. Upon the lawn was a vast tent, canopied with silk, where scores of fine folks were merry-making and taking refreshment; while from the croquet-ground came little bursts of laughter between every tap of the balls. How utterly the memory of her late mistress seemed to have faded away! She saw Gwendoline attended by a little knot of obsequious cavaliers, and looking like a queen with her courtiers. Why should a sensation of dislike which almost amounted to horror have thrilled through Susan's frame as she regarded her? What had the present Mrs. Ferrier ever done to her, to cause her to entertain such hostile feelings? Had she not been forgiving? nay, did not her own presence in the grounds of Glen Druid at that moment testify to Gwendoline's good-will toward her? Susan asked herself these questions, but something within her also furnished the reply. She did not believe in

he genuineness of Mrs. Ferrier's "makings-up" with her, or in the kindness for which she was doubtless expected to credit her. She did not hink her at all a woman likely to forgive an injury, and, least of all, such an offense as she had committed—namely, an attempt to prejudice her with those whose favor she sought. Others might be hoodwinked, if they pleased to be so, but not she. Why, she felt as certain that yonder woman was a false schemer as that she was the most beautiful creature that ever wore woman's shape. Her beauty might dazzle all mankind, and even womankind, but it did not dazzle her. She had heard of serpents that fascinated their victims before destroying them; and although this one had not destroyed her former mistress, she had certainly fascinated her, and suffered her to perish without warning—perhaps both soul and body. And yet she had gained the end which doubtless she had in view from the moment she had set foot in that house as an unsuspected guest. All had gone well with her, and she was even in a position to be magnanimous and patronizing to an honest woman who had done her best to expose her schemes. It was this indifference to her own hostility and show of kindly patronage that stung Susan most. Her soul was exceedingly filled with the scorning of her that was at ease, and with the contempt of the proud. She had ventured, trusting to the weapon of Right, to cross swords with this accomplished fencer, and, after being disgracefully disarmed, had been treated with galling generosity.

For sympathy in her defeat she looked in vain. Even her husband thought her prejudiced and foolish in her antagonism to Mrs. Ferrier, and had rather peremptorily forbidden it to be openly exhibited; it was quarreling, he said, with their own bread and butter. Susan was, however, no more inclined to do that than Mr. Barland; only she was not grateful for her enemy's favors, but considered all she received from her as so much spoiling of the Philistines. She had no wish to declare open war; she had had enough of that, but would wait patiently, silently, until she caught her foe at a disadvantage. Such an opportunity would offer itself one day, she felt sure, if she only waited long enough. In the mean time she had a strong attraction to the house in the dear children, over whom she felt it her mission to watch. Even while making this reflection, Marian herself came riding by on a white pony, led by a groom, while Lady Luttrell held her lightly on the saddle, though she rode with quiet courage, as was her wont, and would have been quite safe alone. She was a very self-reliant, intelligent child, and not easily excited; but, perceiving Susan through the slender hedge, she clapped her hands and cried out, "There is Susie! Oh, Susie, do come and see my dear Ady Uttel!"

Thus adjured, Susan came forward, and paid her respects to her ladyship, and kissed the child.

"Tum along," cried Marian; "oo go one side, and Ady Uttel the other. But no," she said; "poor Eady up stairs; go and fetch her."

"Yes, dear Marian, that is right," said her ladyship, approvingly; "we must not forget baby sister. I think, Susan, if you were to tell the nurse to bring her out—"

"No, no; Susie tum too," interrupted the child.

"Very well, then," said Lady Luttrell, smiling, "bring her out yourself; the music will delight her."

"I thank your ladyship, but I should not like to go among the quality," said Susan, modestly; "and perhaps Mrs. Ferrier might object."

"I will take the blame on my own shoulders, Susan, if there should be any blame, which, however, I am sure will not be the case. Mrs. Ferrier asked you to-day on purpose that you might see the gayeties, I am sure; and besides, if you feel shy, you can avoid the company, and take Eady round the Warrior's Helm; the sea-air will do her good."

Susan took the baby and Lady Luttrell's advice accordingly. She found the narrow path round the strange-shaped promontory quite deserted; every body was in the garden or on the terrace. Only the music and the murmur of voices blended faintly on the ear with the lap of the waves upon the crags below, or with their soft sweep on the sandy beach. Susan was not what is generally termed sentimental; but, though she had never read a line of poetry in her life (unless her chapel hymns could be so called), and was over thirty years of age, and had always kept her maiden eyes on the main chance at least as much as on Samuel her swain, yet she was not uninfluenced by the romance of the situation. She did not forget that it was upon this very walk—to which he had been admitted by favor of the gardener—that Samuel had declared his love for her between the puffs of his pipe, in a quiet, philosophic way, which pleased her perhaps quite as much as raptures would have done. It was years ago now, but the recollection of it was distinct enough, and only made the more mellow and harmonious by the intervening time. She had no regret to trouble her; her present was sufficiently satisfactory; but still she felt that indefinable sorrow for the past because it is past, from which none of us are altogether free; and it was with something of tender melancholy that, with Eady clasped in her arms, she drew near the identical spot—a sort of natural arbor in the rock—where Mr. Samuel Barland had suddenly removed his pipe from his lips with unwonted alacrity, passed the back of his hand rapidly across his mouth, and kissed her for the first time.

The locality had, in her opinion, been ill judged, inasmuch as any one using the path must needs come suddenly upon a couple so engaged, and she had never, therefore, given Mr. Barland the opportunity of so misconducting himself again in that particular spot; but it was all the more sacred to her, as having been the scene of that first embrace, and of it only. As she turned the corner with a step noiseless and slow, in consonance with these tender reminiscences, she suddenly discovered that Sam's idea—or rather something very like it—was being plagiarized. The tall gentleman, with the small blonde mustache and olive complexion, was not absolutely saluting the tall lady, whose face she could not see, but they were without doubt what is termed "laying their heads together" uncommonly close. Susan drew back unobserved, and not a little amused. Well, the Quality were only like other people, it seemed, after all. It would be something to tell Sam when she got home, and would make him laugh in his dry way. With all her thrift and matter-of-fact

ways, Susan was a true woman, and, as such, deeply interested in all love affairs. Without disturbing or unfairly prying upon these two young people, she was determined to know who they were, and especially anxious to recognize the lady. She waited, therefore, with her little charge, on a seat that was placed on the narrow isthmus which joined the Warrior's Helm to the main land, and by which all those who were on that promontory must needs pass on their way back. Some time elapsed before her patience was rewarded, but at last the same tall lady made her appearance alone, and walking rather fast. To Susan's genuine horror, she perceived it was Gwendoline herself, who had thrown a brown mantle over her light dress she had seen her wearing but a few minutes before, and had thereby escaped her recognition.

"Ah! Susan, is that you with my darling Eady?" said Mrs. Ferrier, graciously. "I am glad to see you at Glen Druid again. But I feel the wind somewhat chilly here, even through this warm cloak; I think you had better take baby in."

It was evidently Gwendoline's intention to accompany her, and see her safely away before her late companion should come up, but his impatience frustrated this. Hardly had Susan begun to move, when the young gentleman she had just seen talking so confidentially to his hostess came striding after them, and humming a gay tune. Susan Barland could almost have sworn that she saw a significant glance of caution shoot from Mrs. Ferrier's quiet features as he came up; and, as if in answer to it, the young man observed, "I have been looking for you every where, Mrs. Ferrier, having been deputed to enlist you for croquet."

"Very good, Mr. Mostyn," she replied. "I will just take one kiss of my sweet Eady, and shall then be at your service, though I am but an indifferent player, I do assure you."

"An indifferent player!" thought Susan, with indignation filling her honest breast, as she lifted up the child for what she deemed that "Judas' kiss;" "you are the craftiest player and play-actor that ever breathed. I have always suspected you to be a bad one, but I never thought you were so bad as this."

At tea in the nursery, all that evening, Susan could scarcely think of any thing else than what she had just seen, and on her way home across the solitary moor it engrossed her wholly. She had now not the least intention of telling her husband of that interview to which she had been witness. She was not going to be misjudged a second time, or make any accusation without the proofs. But she was fully convinced in her own mind that "that ere Mrs. Ferrier was one of the wickedest of women." Flirtations among single folks she could blink at: "young people will be young people, and one must expect such things;" but for a married woman to so misbehave herself!

Mrs. Barland, it is needless to say, was a very vulgar personage, and totally ignorant of the manners and customs of polite society; but in addition to this, and what really gave some genuine color to her otherwise unnecessarily virtuous indignation, she had recognized at the second glance, in the Honorable Piers Mostyn, that identical "bonnie laddie" who had accompanied

Miss Treherne, seven months ago, down Glen-dallack mine, as a common workman.

"Ah! my poor master! my poor old master!" exclaimed honest Susan; "you have brought this upon your ain sel', for I would ha' warned you if you would ha' let me. But I do mourn for your innocent bairns."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DR. GISBORNE'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

IF Susan Barland was tormented (as was doubtless the case) with the idea that Mrs. Ferrier was not only triumphant, but happy in the success of her schemes, she might have spared herself that pang. Gwendoline was consumed with disgust, with weariness, with impatience. The perpetual necessity for acting her part did not leave her one hour of ease. She was devoured, too, by the fire of jealousy. Quite superfluously, and solely because it flattered her self-love to be so, she had been very urgent upon Piers to conduct himself as though his affections were entirely disengaged, and he had carried out her instructions to the letter. The flirtations to which she had been a witness rankled in her mind like poison; every glance, every smile of his, bestowed upon another, transfixed her like a dart; while those which she did not see, but imagined, drove her to frenzy. It was not words of tenderness alone that were exchanged between him and her in Mr. Samuel Barland's bower on the Warrior's Helm, and elsewhere. Bitter reproaches, passionate appeals were uttered on the one side, and upon the other apologies, excuses, denials, all more or less unsatisfactory. She was more beautiful than ever, or perhaps she might have escaped from the toils in spite of herself. When she was with him, Piers was devoted to her; she was his empress, his pole-star, as she had ever been; but was there (she knew he was asking himself) any reasonable probability of her ever becoming his wife?

Yes, there was. At all events, the event was more probable than it had been. It was openly remarked that Mr. Ferrier was growing feeble both in body and mind than his age would warrant, when his former activity was taken into account. Gwendoline's influence over him was unbounded; he was dotingly fond of her—he was her slave; but while he hugged the gilded chain, he secretly felt its weight. He was aware, and uncomfortably aware—although he did not own it even to himself—of his inability to cope with her strong will. From whatever causes, however, he was aging and ailing, and Mrs. Ferrier came suddenly to the conclusion that Glen Druid was too gay; that the eternal racket was too much (as it well might be, for even the most well-bred people make some noise) for her husband's nerves, and that he needed quiet. The guests must all be sent away, and, above all, the Honorable Piers Mostyn.

The interview in which she stated this resolve was the stormiest that had yet passed between her lover and herself, though she did her best to exercise self-control. She knew that he was weary of her reproaches, and the idea of his getting tired of her plunged her in despair; yet how should she do otherwise than reproach him?

What made her more bitter against him than even his flirtations was the secret conviction she entertained of having reaped his contempt from the very scheme she had laid to secure him. He did not express this openly, indeed; but there was a certain change in his manner toward her, since she had become Mr. Ferrier's wife, which she did not fail to mark, and which filled her with indignation. He was not so respectful as he had been; he treated her, not with actual coarseness, but with that sort of *camaraderie* which she had noticed to prevail among a certain class of men—the artists, for instance—just as if she *were a man*. This was intolerable to her; she felt it as keenly as any innocent girl insulted by a rude jest; and yet she could not resent it—could not ask him what he meant by such a change. For suppose he was to tell her?

It was infamous of him; it was cowardly; for, supposing she *had* planned this scheme, this man had assented to it, and what right had he now to turn round and despise her for having carried it out—thus far? She had nothing to urge as a reason for this departure save her great love for him, out of respect for which, out of pity for the pain it caused her, she besought him to leave her to bear her lot alone. It was surely as tender a confession as woman could make to man, and ought to have availed her at once. But “why *should* he leave Glen Druid?” was his half obstinate, half careless inquiry. What his tone seemed to her sensitive ear to imply was, “What did it matter if her reputation *should* be imperiled; if their confidential walks and talks together *should* be remarked upon; if society *should* begin to look askance at her? What then? She could hold her own, and be very agreeable company *out of* society.”

Perhaps he did not mean to imply this, or at least all of it; but he had certainly a way with him which he would not have used had she been still Gwendoline Treherne. She conquered at last, as she always did, when the whole force of her will was pitted against his; but the victory was only just gained, and, as it were, by a dead-lift. When she had won it, and he had promised to depart the next day, she began to wish that she had lost it. For how was the life she led to be endured without him? Moreover, she was tortured with the thought that, when away from her, he would forget her—would be unfaithful to her. It was already evident enough that he was tired of waiting for her.

As for the rest of the gay folks, they were got away easily enough, by help of Dr. Gisborne. They were made to understand that illness of some sort was threatening Glen Druid, and made off like rats from a sinking ship. The doctor himself always denied it; but he, or somebody, circulated a report—which was somewhat corroborated by Marian, always delicate, being kept in bed with a sore throat one morning—that there was scarlet fever in the nursery. Lady Luttrell would have offered to stay and nurse the children, but that her husband, reasonably enough, forbade it; but with the rest, including Sir Guy himself, it was *saute qui peut*. The house was cleared in twenty-four hours.

Mr. Ferrier, though ignorant of the cause of his guests' departure, was undoubtedly relieved by it. He was glad to be left once more in quiet, and to the enjoyment of the society of his

wife, of whom, as a hostess with many duties, he had of late seen very little. On their first evening alone, Dr. Gisborne, always a welcome visitor, chanced to drop in. He had not been much with them while the house was full; perhaps that passage-at-arms with my Lord Chillington, the remembrance of which, however, always made the doctor laugh, had a little vexed him; and besides that, he had been a fortnight in France, on a visit to Duvergier, the great analyst.

“We are delighted to see you, doctor, since you don't come *as a doctor*, but as a friend,” said Mr. Ferrier, warmly. “I don't think my wife has been quite easy, on account of the children, all the time you have been away; she has no confidence in any body but you.”

“My dear Mr. Ferrier, your wife has confidence in herself, which is worth all the faith in doctors twice over; but I do flatter myself she is glad to see me back.”

“That is not flattery, since it is honest fact,” said Gwendoline, simply. “I have heard nothing but small-talk for three months. Do, doctor, now tell us something worth hearing. I have scarcely seen you since you have been in France? What did you do there?”

“Well, I did nothing, Mrs. Ferrier; but what I saw done was one of the most curious things you can imagine; indeed, nobody could imagine it. It was rather horrible, however.”

“That's delightful!” exclaimed Gwendoline, clapping her hands together like cymbals to her laugh-music. “I love horrible stories.” And she seated herself playfully on the footstool at Mr. Ferrier's feet, who laid his hand upon her silken head, and smiled with pleasure at her girlish joy. It was seldom that the stately Gwendoline unbent her dignity so far, even to her husband.

“I will give you a *tableau* out of my story, instead of the story itself,” said the doctor, slowly. “It is a very striking one—the most striking save one that I ever witnessed; and you shall guess it, just as though it were one of those charades that were acted here a month ago or so. Imagine a provincial town in France, with every shop shut up, and every window (though that was from another cause), and all the people out of their houses assembled in an open space in front of the Palais de Justice, or crowding the little heights that command it. They are intently gazing upon what is going on in the centre of this space. Five furnaces are ranged there in a circle, and supplied with charcoal from a huge brazier, which is constantly kept at a red heat: a dense and fetid vapor overhangs all; but in front of the furnaces are chemists with their alembics.”

“My dear doctor, I have guessed it,” said Mr. Ferrier, with a movement expressive of disgust. “I read the whole account of the horrid thing in the papers.”

“But I have not read it. Oh, please, let the doctor go on, Bruce. I am so interested. What could all these people have been about?”

“They were employed in the detection of an infamous crime—a murder,” continued the doctor, gravely. “Within the court-house the scene was almost as curious. It was crammed with spectators, as the streets were, and at least one half of these were ladies—not only women, I

mean, but ladies of fashion. There was scarcely a poor person in the court, into which it cost an unofficial person a napoleon to enter. The gentlemen, as well as the ladies, all held a smelling-bottle, which they almost constantly applied to their nose, for the odor from without filled the whole place. I was told that seven hundred smelling-bottles were sold in Tulle that morning."

"I really think, doctor," remonstrated Mr. Ferrier, uneasily, "you might spare Gwendoline these details."

The doctor laughed good-humoredly; he was thinking how ill this old gentleman appreciated the strength of his wife's character, and how little he guessed with what strange stories he (the doctor) had regaled her before now.

"Very well," he said; "so be it. Perhaps I am a little too professional in my narration, but Duvergier sent for me expressly to take part in some of his experiments connected with the affair in question. The French analysts are certainly far in advance of us—that is, the best of them; for, indeed, these provincial chemists would have done nothing of themselves. It was Orfila and Duvergier, as you may remember, Mr. Ferrier, and not they, who discovered arsenic in every portion of the body."

"Body! What body?" inquired Gwendoline, with interest. "This is no charade; this is a positive riddle—and I can not guess it."

"Stop a little," said the doctor. "In the middle of this court-house is a lady of surpassing beauty, and not twenty years of age, and upon her all eyes are directed. She is dressed in elegant mourning; her handkerchief is edged with black lace, and her smelling-bottle is of black and gold. Beside her stands a young and handsome advocate, who is pleading her cause with enthusiastic eloquence. He is pleading for her life, for she is a criminal at the bar of justice, accused of—"

"It is Madame Laffarge," exclaimed Gwendoline, with an involuntary shudder.

"There, you see you have given her quite a shock, Gisborne," said Mr. Ferrier, angrily. "I am really astonished at your imprudence."

"Nay, don't scold the doctor," said Gwendoline, lifting her white hand above her head, the fingers of which the old man pressed fondly to his lips. "Of course I was shocked, but I am also immensely interested. I heard Lord Luttrell talking about the case only the other day; but then he tells stories so ill. Now, pray, go on with your narrative, doctor. I must hear the end, now you have got so far."

"Well, I have told you the worst, my dear Mrs. Ferrier. The rest was all in the French style, and more like what one sees in a stage-play than the genuine drama of life. When Madame Laffarge's counsel closed his defense, which he did in tears, the audience all rose and cheered him; and when the commissioners, who had been sent down for the purpose, and before whom the case was tried, announced that no poison had been detected in the exhumed remains, and thereby acquitted the lady, the court rose at her as the pit does in a theatre at some favorite actress, and screamed themselves hoarse with applause."

"But I thought she was found guilty after all?" observed Gwendoline, carelessly, her inter-

est having apparently ceased with the result of the trial.

"She was acquitted at Tulle, but she was tried a few days afterward in Paris, when Duvergier and the rest were the analysts; and, as I said, they found arsenic in every portion of the body that was submitted to them. There was not a doubt about her guilt; but she was young and beautiful, and poor Monsieur Laffarge—the doctor was within a hair-breadth of drawing a very unpleasant parallel, but saved himself with nimble dexterity—" and poor Monsieur Laffarge had been very unpopular, and indeed deserved to be so."

"I forget whether they hung the wretched woman?" observed Mr. Ferrier.

"Nay, they don't hang in France. Did they put her to death? you would ask. Well, though, in my opinion, she richly deserved it, they did not. They found—in her youth and beauty, I suppose—'extenuating circumstances.' She was condemned to hard labor for life and exposure in the pillory."

"Poor wretch!" sighed Mr. Ferrier, pitifully; "that must have been worse than death itself to one like her."

"Not at all," returned Dr. Gisborne, positively. "'There you are quite mistaken; in your eyes, of course, it seems so, but not to one like her. There is nothing which scoundrels of both sexes fear so much as Death, and what may happen afterward. There are some well-meaning folks who would do away with capital punishment. If they effect their object, and the good results which they anticipate do not flow, I only hope that future murderers will confine their attentions to their friends, or let a law be passed that henceforth nobody shall be hung for murdering those who object to capital punishment; that would meet every body's views. Every crime should have its fit penalty, and it should never be made a matter of indifference to the criminal whether he add murder—to which there is always a temptation, from the impunity it insures—to his offense or not."

"Yet those two convicts spared my life and Fanny's that night at Bedivere Court," observed Gwendoline, "although they had already committed murder."

"Nay, only one of them had—that is, as a principal; and he, according to your own account, would have cut your throat without remorse. The other, who had been only an accessory to the previous crime, was your protector, if you remember. Thus your experience only corroborates my argument. Of course, there are some persons who have really no fear of death at all, and whom, therefore, capital punishment would not deter. The Chinese go to the scaffold quite philosophically, and smoke their cheroots to the last moment. In 1805, I was invited by the surgeon in Newgate to visit a man named Heygate, under sentence of death there. It was a very curious study. In all my travels, I never saw so great a savage. He tried to strangle his keeper the night before he was hung; he terrified the ordinary by his blasphemies, and even upon the scaffold reproached his fellow-criminal for listening to the good man; and he cheered heartily as he kicked off his shoes, to prevent the fulfillment of some prophecy of his friends that he would die in them. But I would hang these

philosophers, notwithstanding their stoicism; nay, even because of it, since such creatures must be all the more difficult to deter from crime. The fact is, however, these merely brutish natures are very rare. Our murderers fear the rope above all things; and Madame Laffarge would have shrunk from the guillotine far more than from the pillory and the galleys."

Mr. Ferrier was not a man to feel much interest in criminal psychology, nor indeed to be interested in any abstract question whatever. His success in life had been chiefly owing to a nature essentially practical, and which had never been diverted from the object of its pursuit by theoretical ideas. He yawned, and muttered something about having a letter of importance to write that night, but the doctor was too occupied with his topic to remark it.

"These prisoners all seem so stupid," remarked Mr. Ferrier, impatiently, and as though stupidity had been the worst feature in a poisoner's character: "they always get found out."

"Not always," said Dr. Gisborne, gravely; "not nearly so often as you imagine. It is not that science fails in her mission, nor even the police; but crimes are often smoothed—even very great ones—from social considerations."

"Now shall we hear, my dear Gwendoline," said Mr. Ferrier, smiling, "that the aristocracy of this country are greatly given to putting folks out of the way by violence. I am quite sure that is what our radical friend here is about to tell us."

"Not at all, my dear sir," replied the doctor, laughing. "Murder is quite an exceptional peccadillo even with them. But I have seen some examples of it too. I had once the honor of being called in to attend an English *milord*, traveling on the Continent, and suffering from a very curious disease; he was wasting away into his grave, and none could guess the cause of it. A female relative in whom he placed every confidence recited his case to me with the most tender emotion, and entreated my aid, since there were none but foreign physicians to attend upon him. I paid him a visit accordingly, but could make nothing of his symptoms, unless (which seemed very improbable) he was suffering from the effects of some irritant poison. For some days I found nothing to corroborate this view; but presently he happened to let fall the fact that he had bequeathed his fair companion a handsome independence after his death. Then I watched her as narrowly as I watched my patient. She was so devoted to him (he said), that she even prepared his food for him with her own hands. I analyzed the food, but found nothing of a suspicious character; and the *milord* grew worse every day. At last, when I knew that the lady would be absent for a few hours, I entered her apartments, and made a most minute examination. I found two of the chairs exceedingly flat, as if the stuffing had been taken out of them; and in a locked drawer I came upon a small box, with a sort of sausage-machine inside it, but of the most fairy proportions. Upon the cutting instrument, which was as sharp as a razor, and apparently as clean, I detected, by the help of the microscope, something which solved the mystery. She was accustomed to chop horsehair exceedingly fine, and mix it with his lordship's food. This irritated the stomach unceasingly, and would have killed him in about a fortnight from the

time I made the discovery. To all intents and purposes, the woman was, of course, a murderess. Yet her intended victim not only declined to prosecute her, but retained her in the same confidential position as she occupied before, except that he relieved her from the duties of the cuisine. 'I don't like chopped horsehair in my dishes, Julie,' said he, quietly; and she understood him at once, and cheerfully acceded to the new arrangement, which exists, I believe, to this day."

"There is another instance of stupidity in poisoners," observed Mr. Ferrier, "to use a sausage-machine and chop up the stuffing of the chairs! Why did she not give him some slow poison?"

"Because there is no such thing, my dear sir; it is only the novelists who describe people being put out of the world by degrees. The operation can not be suspended, as is vulgarly supposed, but must needs manifest itself within a very short period."

"Then why did not his lady-friend give him prussic acid?" asked Mr. Ferrier, with that testy obstinacy which a dull man so often exhibits coincidentally with his ignorance. "A few drops would have secured her legacy in half a minute—or even a few seconds—would it not?"

"Well, not necessarily so soon as that. I have read of an instance—I think Taylor quotes it—of a man who walked about and smoked a pipe after a large dose of it. But its action is very rapid; so rapid, indeed, that death by prussic acid almost inevitably excites suspicion and produces inquiry."

"And yet you doctors give it to your patients, do you not?" said Mr. Ferrier, yawning. "I have heard it spoken of as being a remedy—or, at all events, a mitigation—for some complaints."

"We prescribe it occasionally, without doubt, and find it very useful. Poison *v.* Palsy is a case often tried in medicine; and for palpitation of the heart it is recommended, but, of course, only in the smallest quantities: one drop in a wine-glass of water, for instance, would be a sufficient dose."

"Just so," said Mr. Ferrier, carelessly. "Gwendoline, my dear, I must leave you to do the honors to Dr. Gisborne, while I write a letter of importance, which I shall get him to be good enough to post for me at St. Medards;" and, stooping down, he touched the forehead of his young wife with his lips, and left the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRESCRIPTION.

"CAN you guess why my husband left the room so abruptly?" inquired Gwendoline, as soon as Dr. Gisborne and herself were left alone in the drawing-room.

"Well, I am afraid I can: I believe my anecdotes began to bore him. The fact is, you have spoiled me, my dear Mrs. Ferrier, by always listening so patiently to my long stories; it makes me fancy that they must have an interest for other people; I really believe I have driven your husband out of the room with them."

"No, no, it was not that," answered Gwendoline, with a sigh: "I will tell you why he left us presently; but, in the mean time, finish your budget of experiences. You can't imagine what

a pleasure it is to listen to you, after the flood of fashionable twaddle that has of late been poured into my ears. You were saying that that scene at Tulle was the *second* most striking spectacle that you ever beheld; what, then, was the most striking of all?"

"My dear Mrs. Ferrier," returned the doctor, smiling, "since the days of the sultan in the *Arabian Nights*, there has certainly been no such insatiable listener as yourself." But it was plain the doctor was flattered nevertheless, and pleased enough to pursue his reminiscences at the bidding of one as appreciative as she was beautiful. "Well, let me see," mused he; "yes, the strangest scene to which I was ever witness was the examination of Mademoiselle D'Arcy. That was about ten years ago, in Paris. Her story was a very sad and unpleasant one, and there is no need to speak of it: what was most remarkable in the case was the time during which the proceedings in the court of law were conducted. She had been very ill treated and almost frightened to death by the scoundrel against whom she was bearing witness, and the effect of the shock had been to make her cataleptic. She was only in a condition to appear and answer questions at stated intervals—namely, from midnight to four in the morning. The court, therefore, in Paris, rose at the close of the usual day's proceedings, and adjourned to the hour in question, but, in the mean time, the whole audience remained fixed in their seats. Then, at twelve o'clock at night, to see that beautiful young woman—just out of her death-trance, as it were—brought in to give her evidence, and to know that in a few hours she would again sink into a state without sense or motion—ah! it was a most pitiful spectacle indeed. But, however, the villain was found guilty, which was some comfort."

"That is the case with most people who commit crimes, is it not? Even if, as you were saying, they occasionally escape punishment, still they are found out by somebody?"

"Yes, the most artful and well-planned scheme of villainy has generally some flaw in it, and often some gross mistake, which you would think would never have been committed by any one in his senses."

"But may not that be done on purpose, in order that, if the worst came to the worst, to get off on the plea of insanity?"

"I hardly think that, though, indeed, any excuse of that sort is always made the most of. For my part, I would have all persons who commit murder—that is, without great provocation, I mean—put to death, whether they are 'homicidal maniacs' or not. If they are sane, they deserve it; if they are really mad, they would suffer nothing from the apprehension of death (which is the real torture), and they would be delivered by it from a life of misery. In this world they can do nothing but harm; and as for their future, it is surely safe to leave them in the hands of Him who made them."

"I had no idea you were so harsh a man," said Gwendoline, with a slight shudder. "You seem to be all for justice, and to have no pity."

"Your remark, my dear Mrs. Ferrier, is more severe upon Providence than upon myself. It is God who is all-merciful, and who will make allowance where our judgment is too hard. As for me, my pity, I confess, is exhausted by the

victim, and I have none left for the murderer. But we were talking of what follies criminals will sometimes commit in the execution of their atrocities. Taylor tells us of a hospital nurse who murdered a patient in the most artful manner, so that the occurrence would certainly have been taken for suicide but for one circumstance. After having committed the crime, she mechanically 'laid out' the patient, as she was professionally accustomed to do, smoothed the clothes, straightened the arms, with the palms open, and so forth. Not even the tidiest person ever committed suicide in that way; and so, on the evidence she had herself supplied, the poor nurse was hanged. That is, of course, an extreme case of criminal mismanagement; but it is much more difficult to conceal a crime than folks are apt to imagine. Nature herself even sometimes appears as a witness, and points out the offender in a terribly straightforward fashion. A man was once charged with the murder of a woman who kept house in the City for a firm who only used it during the daytime. The key of the front door was found upon his person, and it was found that with that very weapon the deed must have been committed—thus. The ecchymosis—the bruise, that is—upon the victim's face had actually taken the very shape of the wards of the key. It was one of the neatest cases for Law and Medicine to go hand and hand together in one can possibly imagine. However, I have only read of the thing, and so can not answer for its truth."

"Ah! I like to hear you tell of what you have seen with your own eyes, doctor. Now, what is the most singular affair in which you yourself, not as a witness, but as one of the parties concerned, have ever been personally engaged?"

"My dear Mrs. Ferrier, you rather puzzle me: I have been concerned in so many queer things. Do you mean by the most singular the most terrible?"

"Well, if you insist on my confessing how fond I am of horrors, yes."

"The most trying ordeal I ever underwent," returned the doctor, "was, curiously enough, a scientific experiment. It was in the endeavor to observe the moment of what is called somatic death—that is, when the action of the heart ceases—in a man that has been hanged. It was in Albany, in the United States, that this opportunity presented itself. A criminal condemned to death there was placed by the authorities at the disposal of science to this extent; he was hanged in a passage of the prison, only twelve inches from the ground, and the jail surgeon and myself stood, one on each side of the poor wretch, with our fingers on his pulse. Yes, that was certainly the most sensational adventure in which I was ever engaged. In the fifth minute there were a hundred and twenty-eight pulsations. There, I think I have told you shocking stories enough. I don't know what your husband would say if he had been listening to them; he does not at all share your taste for the terrible."

"No," said Gwendoline, smiling; "yet we continue to agree pretty well together, notwithstanding that defect in his character."

"Agree! Why, my dear Mrs. Ferrier—for I must not call you Gwendoline now—you are a model couple; that is what every body says, and, for once, I am prepared to own that every body is right. You have exceeded even my ex-

pectations—an old friend like me may say so—as wife and step-mother; and you know that I need to ‘pass my life in defending you,’ before your marriage. And yet, dear me, it seems only the other day that you were quite a child. Well, I am glad to have had this ‘crack,’ as your husband would call it, alone with you; it reminds me of the old days at Bedivere; does it not? My dear Mrs. Ferrier, what is the matter? I hope to heaven that you do not regret them?” The kind old doctor took Gwendoline’s hand in his, and stroked it tenderly, for the large tears were rolling down her cheeks.

“No, doctor,” said she, fervently, “I do not regret them; I am happier now than ever I was in my life—if the cause were only removed for which I weep; and I think that it lies in your power to remove it.”

“No, doctor,” said she, fervently, “I do not regret them; I am happier now than ever I was in my life—if the cause were only removed for which I weep; and I think that it lies in your power to remove it.”

“Then consider it already removed, dear Gwendoline,” said the doctor, affectionately. “I have always considered myself *in loco parentis* to you—a sort of flying buttress of a father, and feel none the less so because you have married Mr. Ferrier—a good husband, I am sure, if ever there was one.”

“Yes, indeed, doctor, the best of husbands, and a far better one than I deserve. It is because I respect, nay, reverence him so deeply, that I am now in sorrow. I can think of nothing else—I could not even listen to what you have been telling me just now, though I bade you go on with your stories. I wished to put off as long as possible the moment which has now arrived, when I have to speak of my husband’s illness.”

“His illness! surely you are mistaken there. Mr. Ferrier is, without doubt, more feeble and languid than I should wish to see him; and I am glad, for his sake, that all those fine folks have left the house; but a little quiet will soon bring him round, believe me.”

Gwendoline shook her head with a sad smile. “Perhaps there is not much the matter, doctor; but there is more than you think. Do you recollect what you had been saying, when he rose and left the room so abruptly, about palpitation of the heart?”

“Yes; I said that a drop of prussic acid in a wineglass of water was sometimes given in such cases.”

“Just so. Then he got up at once, if you remember. He did so, I feel certain, because he was afraid of my speaking of his symptoms to you in his presence. You know his morbid horror—so different from papa—of being doctored, or having any thing said of his own ailments. Yet Bruce’s notion is that he has got heart disease.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” exclaimed Dr. Gisborne, decisively. “That’s all his fancy; he has nothing of the sort.”

“I am truly delighted to hear you say so; but he is fully persuaded that he *has*. It may be, as you say, only his fancy; but you know what a strong hold such fancies take in old—in those who are not young. Bruce is exceedingly nervous and worried about himself, and, of course, that worries *me*.”

“You astonish me, my dear Mrs. Ferrier, with this account of your husband. I should have thought that if there had been one man in the world less subject to morbid notions about the state of his own health, it was Bruce Ferrier.”

“But then you are not his wife, you know,” sighed Gwendoline, with a faint smile. “To you he would doubtless always appear so. If you were to offer to prescribe for him now, he would protest there was nothing the matter with him; men are so queer. He got almost angry the other day when I proposed that he should consult you on the matter: but yet he himself proposed the very remedy of which you were just speaking—and it was a most curious coincidence your happening to do so—of a drop of prussic acid in water. He certainly does suffer from palpitation; but then, as I told him, nothing should induce me to let him try so dangerous a remedy without your approval. Now, if you will—only humor him so far as to write out a prescription, I will take care that he does not take the medicine oftener than is absolutely necessary. I dare say, if the palpitations are mere nervousness, that the knowledge that he has the remedy at hand will be sufficient without actually taking it.”

“Yes,” mused the doctor, thoughtfully; “of course, there can be no harm in his taking one drop (which of course you will see he does not exceed) in a wineglass of water. But I don’t much like recommending such a dangerous medicine; there are others—”

“You will do as you think proper, of course, dear Dr. Gisborne; but I must say that I am afraid that nothing *but* prussic acid will satisfy Bruce. He has taken the whim into his head that that will do him good, and I am sure he will have no confidence in any thing else.”

“Then, by all means, my dear Mrs. Ferrier, let him be humored so far.” And Dr. Gisborne sat down and wrote the prescription as she had requested. “I will leave it at the chemist’s to-night on my way home, if you wish it,” said he.

“There is no necessity for that; thank you, doctor,” answered Gwendoline, carelessly. “I shall be driving over to St. Medards to-morrow, I have no doubt, and I will call at the shop myself.” Which accordingly, on the afternoon of the ensuing day, Mrs. Ferrier did. She was waited upon by Mr. Samuel Barland in person, who made up the prescription, and placed the bottle in her own hands. Some weeks afterward, Gwendoline informed Dr. Gisborne with a grateful smile that her husband had scarcely ever complained of palpitations since he had had the remedy in the house, and nothing more was said about the matter.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WILL AND THE WAY.

A YEAR has passed since Mr. Ferrier’s second marriage. He is more devoted to his beautiful wife—whose charms, indeed, have increased as they have matured—than ever, though the haunting sense that he is unable to cope with her gloved-iron will grows upon him too. He is placid and happy, except that it somewhat frets him that they have no child.

That Gwendoline’s good behavior is a matter

by no means "put on" for a time, even Mrs. Barland is constrained to own; little Eady, now two years old, and marvelously like her Italian mother, is almost as fond of her as is Marian, who is nearly six, a quiet and thoughtful little creature—"quite a companion," as the saying is, to her father, and a most patient playfellow with her small sister.

Strange to say, in the society of this sweet child, with whose affectionate simplicity is mingled a sort of motherly virtue and grown-up good sense, Gwendoline is secretly ill at ease. Her innocence, her unselfish nature, and (especially) her simple trustfulness in herself (Gwendoline), seem so many reproaches to her; they sometimes compel her to reflect—and reflection has become hateful to her. A correspondence is kept up between herself and her lover, but it is mostly on one side—*her* side. Piers writes but seldom, and then only short letters, the tone of which is even more unsatisfactory than the actual contents. He finds the chain that links them—so much more binding in his case than any legitimate tie would have been—intolerably burdensome, and she perceives it. Yet she can not endure to relinquish her designs and give him up, but is madly devoted to him still. Mr. Ferrier has aged considerably, and is growing mentally more feeble, but there is no appearance of their marriage being annulled by the Great Divorcer. Her husband may live on for years. With his feebleness has come over him a touching tenderness of manner and feeling toward all about him; he had never been harsh, but that sturdy matter-of-fact character, which was almost stern, is visibly softening. To Gwendoline, indeed, he has been always tender; and his fond reliance upon her increases, notwithstanding she is more haughty and imperious with him than of old.

They were alone together one evening (as they usually were now), when Mr. Ferrier made an unexpected, but not unhopèd-for communication. "My darling," said he, "I dare say you would never guess what I have been so busy about the last few days. I have been making my will."

"Your will, Bruce?" returned she, quietly, though a sudden flush tinged her pale cheeks in spite of herself. "What made you think of that? There are many years of happiness in store for you yet, I trust."

"I trust so too, darling—*some* years, at all events. But I am getting an old man, and the hope which I had entertained— But there, let me explain to you what I have done."

"My dear Bruce, you know that I never could understand business matters; things that are so easy to you are to me so difficult—I know I shall never comprehend you." But she pushed aside the embroidery-frame at which she was engaged, and gave herself up to listen to him, for all that.

"My darling," he began again, "if you were of a self-seeking and ambitious nature, which I am sure you are not, I should not make known to you, as I am about to do, the disposition of my property, but leave you to learn it after my death; and if you were inclined to be jealous of my dear children, in place of being as good a mother to them as though they were your own flesh and blood, I should also keep silence, for I have considered them in my will far more than I have considered you; still, you will have no reason to complain, I hope."

"I am sure I shall not, dear Bruce—quite sure. But why should you pain me by talking of such things; you are healthy and strong, and there will be time enough years hence to enter upon this subject."

"No, dear Gwendoline, there will not—or, at least, there *may* not be time. While my mind is still vigorous and able to attend to such matters, I prefer to speak of them to you. Between us two there should be no secrets, nor a single subject which we can not venture to discuss."

"Of course there should be no secrets," said Gwendoline. "But as respects a will, there always seems to be some embarrassment—"

"I feel none, my darling," interrupted Mr. Ferrier, fondly. "I know that I can never be misunderstood nor misjudged by you. Why not hear from my own lips what you will certainly hear sooner or later from those of a stranger, while I—when I am lying dead, and you will no longer be chained to an old husband, to whom you may one day, perhaps, have to be as much nurse as wife?"

"I can not listen to this, dear Bruce," said Gwendoline, covering her eyes with her right hand, while her husband held her other captive in his own. "You distress me more than I can say. I would rather even hear the will itself than such sad talk. Have you got the document here?—not that it matters; it is sure to be all seals, and tapes, and gibberish."

Considering that "it did not matter," Mrs. Ferrier's face wore certainly a look of interest as she put this question, and when the answer came, "No, darling, I have not got the will, for I sent it to my London lawyer yesterday for safe keeping," the shadow of a cloud flitted across her brow.

"The conditions, Gwendoline, although very simple, are in the document itself set forth with the usual prolixity, and you will understand them from my mouth far better than in lawyers' phraseology. Well, then, first, with regard to your dear self, you will, of course, have your jointure; and, in addition, I have bequeathed to you sufficient plate and furniture to set up with in a house of your own, should circumstances ever cause the dear girls and you to part."

"That will never be," said Gwendoline, earnestly.

"Not while your affectionate care can be of use to them, darling, of that I feel quite assured. But if they were both to marry, for instance, they would doubtless each have establishments separate from your own."

"Just so," assented Gwendoline; "I had forgotten; it seemed so impossible that the dear children and myself should ever live apart."

"I have also bequeathed you my jewels; in my poor opinion you should always wear jewels, darling; they become you, and you become them, so fitly. I have also left you what I refused to leave you before we married, and when your unselfish goodness, of which I have now had so satisfactory an experience, was comparatively untried—I have left you sole guardian to my two daughters."

A light of triumph, which she strove in vain to quench, came into Gwendoline's eyes.

"Yes, darling, that is your just reward, and I am glad to see how much it pleases you. You are their sole guardian; but I have appointed

Mr. Tudor, my lawyer, your co-trustees. While my daughters are under age, you will be allowed four thousand pounds a year for their maintenance and education, which sum, in case of the demise of either, will not be reduced. Glen Druid is also to be maintained as your residence, at the expense of the estate, and on its present footing. The remainder of the income accruing from the property is to be invested in government securities, for the benefit of the children. Even at present I am able to leave each of them what will represent at least seven thousand pounds a year; and in the event of either dying under age, the whole will then revert to the survivor, who will have the absolute disposal of it upon her coming of age. In the event of either or both marrying before their majority, this arrangement will still hold good, for I am sure that you will take care that their husbands are honorable and trustworthy persons—to whom, if you can intrust my sweet girls, you may surely intrust their money."

Gwendoline listened in silence. Mr. Ferrier was deeply affected, not only by what he had said, but by what he had in his mind, and was about to say. "I hope, my darling, that this disposition of my property is such as you approve? I have left you what is more precious to me than all my riches—my Marian and my Edith."

"You have been most kind, dear Bruce, indeed. I trust that I may prove myself worthy of such affectionate confidence."

"I have no doubt of that, Gwendoline—not a shadow of doubt. I have only to add, that in case—that in case we should be blessed with a child of our own (though, should we be so, I can hardly fancy your love for it being greater than it is for the little ones which Giulia gave me), this disposition of my property will of course be materially altered. God has given me much increase in the basket and in the store, and there will be enough and to spare for all."

It was as much as Mr. Ferrier's mental and bodily strength would permit to compass this statement and to express it with clear conciseness. The task was itself an effort, and the considerations which it suggested affected him deeply. It was distressing to him to think of that day (in all human probability at no great distance) when he should be parted from his Gwendoline.

Mrs. Ferrier, too, seemed much distressed by the nature of this communication. For some days afterward she appeared moody and silent, and when she could be spared from the nursery—which was just now a hospital, since both the children had whooping-cough, though of a mild character—she took long solitary walks, in the course of which she revolved many things. On one of these occasions she met Susan Barland, to whom her manner was always gracious, while, on the other hand, Susan was respectful and solicitous about her welfare; women in all ranks of life being equal proficient in hypocrisy toward foes of their own sex—and also, it may be added, as equally failing to impose upon one another.

Susan was quite distressed at seeing Mrs. Ferrier look so poorly, and "unlike herself."

"Well, Susan," answered she, frankly, "I am not well; there is nothing amiss with my bodily

health indeed, but I am sadly worried. I don't mind telling you, who are such an old friend of the family, but Mr. Ferrier's state of health makes me very uneasy. He has got his old palpitations again, and is constantly complaining of giddiness, and it is so difficult to know what to do—to make him take care of himself without frightening him, which would be the worst thing in the world, and, indeed, with his heart disease, might be fatal at any moment."

"Lor, ma'am, has Mr. Ferrier got heart disease?" exclaimed Susan, really shocked by this intelligence.

"Hush! yes; but don't talk about it, for fear it should get round to his own ears, which, to say the least, would annoy him terribly. I hate to talk of it myself, Susan, though I can't help thinking of it, as you perceive. You are going up to see our little ones, I suppose; they are much better, I am glad to say; but you are always welcome in the nursery, you know, whenever you like to come. I hope they give you a good cup of tea, and treat you well?"

"Very well, I thank you, ma'am."

"I am delighted to hear it. We are to have a grand ball—not that it is my wish, but Mr. Ferrier says we have seen nothing of any body for so long—on the 31st, as I dare say you have heard. If you would like to come up and hear the music, I dare say Jane can make you up a bed somewhere. If Mr. Barland will give you leave then—for we who are wives are not our own masters—come by all means. I hope your husband is well? Good morning, Susan."

Mrs. Barland never conversed with the mistress of Glen Druid except in the shortest sentences, and used as few of them as she decently could. She was always glad to get away from her, as from an adversary with whom she was no match at tongue-fence; and Gwendoline was rather amused at this cowardice than otherwise. She knew that she was no favorite of the woman's; but she made the great mistake of despising her foe: the enmity of no one—and especially of one whom we have wronged, and afterward patronized—ought to be despised.

Susan did not discredit Mrs. Ferrier's statement about her husband, although she entirely rejected the idea that she was looking ill from "worry" upon his account. The worse he was—in Susan's view—the better Gwendoline would be pleased, for she had only taken him for his money, and when he died would probably marry that young gentleman whom she had seen her flirting with upon the Warrior's Helm. "She was a deep one, she was, if ever a woman was deep." Directly Susan got home, she reported to her husband the whole of the late conversation, but with an addendum with respect to his having kept her in the dark about Mr. Ferrier's state of health. "Since," said she, "you must have surely known about it, as you make up his prescriptions."

"Yes," said he, in his philosophic way, "I give him something—what is it?—drops—for these palpitations, I suppose. But I don't think there's much amiss with the old gentleman. Besides, people's diseases are not my business, but only the nasty things they take for 'em. You had better ask Dr. Gisborne."

Accordingly, the next day, when Susan, coming out of the lodge gates at Glen Druid, hap-

pened to meet the doctor, about to pay a professional visit to the nursery, and he, as an old acquaintance, stopped to speak with her, she ventured to ask him point-blank whether her old master had really heart disease or not.

"Pooh! pooh! heart disease? No," was the doctor's reply. "He has no more heart disease than I have: it's all stuff; but he is as full of whims as an egg's full of meat."

"Well, sir, Mrs. Ferrier thinks he has, at all events."

"The more fool she, if she does. Her husband thinks so, I dare say, but then there is no limit to what nervous people will imagine is the matter with them in the way of disease."

"Well, sir, at all events, I do hope he will do himself no harm by taking those drops so constant."

"What! what's that?" exclaimed the doctor, pulling his horse sharply up, just after he had given him the spur. "What drops?"

"Why, them drops for the palpitations. Samuel says he makes them up very constant."

"I must see to that," said the doctor, gravely. "It is all very well for folks to be fanciful, but they must not indulge themselves in what is hurtful. I am glad you spoke, Mrs. Barland. Good morning." And Dr. Gisborne was speaking to Gwendoline herself upon the subject within five minutes. "I say," exclaimed he, "what's this I hear about your husband having these drops so often from the chemist's? That won't do, you know, my dear Mrs. Ferrier, at all. I said particularly they were only to be given when he had—or fancied he had—those palpitations."

"My dear doctor," returned Gwendoline, smiling, "how like that is to the stories of your good folks at St. Medards! It is a most ludicrous exaggeration, I assure you. The fact is, that the first bottle was accidentally broken, so I ordered a second; and then, fearing a similar misfortune at a time when Bruce might be nervous and uneasy, a third. He has scarcely taken a dose since I told you he was so much better."

"Oh, that alters the case; but I think I had better just give him a word of warning."

"Pray don't, doctor; I earnestly beg of you not to do so. You have no idea how nervous he is, and the very mention of the subject would, I am confident, be quite sufficient to bring on an attack—to make him apply the very remedy the use of which you deprecate."

"Very good," said Dr. Gisborne; "then I will say nothing more about it; only be careful."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE POSTSCRIPT.

CHRISTMAS had been passed at Glen Druid unmarked by any unusual festivities; but it was understood that the ball on the 31st was to be a very grand affair. The ideas that had been inculcated in Mr. Ferrier's youth in Scotland caused him to think much of New-year's eve; and Gwendoline had spoken truth when she said it was at her husband's own desire that the invitations had been issued—some for dinner, but of course by far the largest number for the ball and supper that were to follow. At least two hundred of the *élite* of the county and neighborhood were

asked "to see the old year out and the new year in" at Glen Druid, and great preparations were made for their reception. Gwendoline, as was her custom, was dressed betimes, so early, indeed, that no guest could be expected for the next half hour. Magnificently attired, she sat in her boudoir like a queen in her royal bower—her bouquet by her side, and pen in hand. It was a strange time for writing; but a sudden eager desire to do so had seized her, and she did not balk it, and yet she was not one to indulge herself in a mere whim. Let us look over her bare bright shoulder, smooth as marble, white as snow, and see what she is writing. It is a letter; and her pen flies so fast that she has already reached the second page.

"Are you thinking of me, Piers, as I am thinking of you? No. It is not to be expected, you will say. But are you thinking of me *at all*? Your cousin Maude is staying with you at Luttrell—I know that, though you omitted to mention it—and I hate her." The last three words were dashed out with one fierce stroke of the pen as soon as written, and then most carefully obliterated. "Forgive my petulance, my darling. If you knew what I have suffered, what I suffer now, you could forgive me every thing. You would be kinder, warmer, and more loving in what you write; for I know you do love me dearly. And I— But I can never tell you how I love you. I dare not think about you, and yet you are the only one I care to think of. To-night there is a party here—a dinner, and then a ball. I would rather be pacing the moorland all night long, than be doing what I shall have to do—receive all these dull folks, smile, talk, be civil, and play out the part expected of a pattern hostess. This dignified respectability costs me what you can imagine to keep up; but that is the least of my troubles. Piers, I can not stand this life much longer; indeed I can not. It is driving me mad. I swear to you that even the poverty from which I once shrank appalled would be welcome rather than this loathsome existence of pretense and suspense. I—"

Here the noise of the great hall bell rang through the house, announcing the arrival of some early guest, for, in the country, folks can not time their distance so easily as all to arrive within five minutes. Gwendoline put the half-finished note away into her escritoir, and locked it. Then she rose, and stood before the mirror, with a candle raised above her head. It was a glorious sight that she beheld there; and, in spite of her bitter thoughts, the spectacle of her own transcendent beauty brought a flush of triumph to her cheek.

The diamonds which her husband said she ought to wear at all times were sparkling in her hair and on her fair bosom; her dress was costly and brilliant, and became her to a marvel. She was scarcely one-and-twenty, but all the charm of full-grown womanhood was added to the grace of youth.

"Yes, darling, you are beautiful indeed!" exclaimed a fond, admiring voice; and Mr. Ferrier, who had come in from his dressing-room unobserved, laid his hand lightly and lovingly upon her shoulder. She shrank from it as from some adder's fang, dropped the light with an expression almost of loathing, and rushed out of the room. The hated touch of her husband's

hand, taking her unawares at such a moment, had been too much for her, and for the first time in her married life she had been thrown off her guard.

For the first time, too, Mr. Ferrier felt dimly doubtful of his wife's affection, hazily suspicious and annoyed. He passed his hand over his rugged forehead, and sat down perplexed and bewildered. What could it all mean? Had his sudden coming upon her frightened her, as it were, out of her wits, so that she knew not what she was doing? or had it made her what he had never known her to be before—petulant and angry with him? But the look she had given him was not one of terror, nor of anger; it had been worse than either. It was one of unmistakable dislike and disgust. What *could* it mean? His eyes rolled aimlessly round the room, where the pictures were still hanging which his Giulia had prized so highly, and the sight of them brought his dead wife to his mind. He had almost forgotten her; the last years of his life had seemed to comprise the main part of his existence; the remainder, wherein there had been no Gwendoline, had sunk into insignificance. Yet Giulia had never given him a glance like that. The old man was cut to the heart. He tried to reason with himself—to make excuses for his beautiful idol—in vain. Again the noise of the front-door bell was heard, and he made an effort to rouse himself, and succeeded; he went down stairs slowly and sadly, yet with a firm step, to receive his guests. His wife was already in the drawing-room, wreathed in smiles, and she had a particularly loving one for him as he came in. He smiled again, not bitterly, but with a touching pathos. The thought was chilling his heart that he had done wrong—being old enough to be her grandfather—to wed this fair and youthful creature; and he blamed himself, not her. He did the honors of the feast with courteous gravity, but that was all. He could not exercise that splendid hospitality so genially as had been his wont. His spirit was broken within him.

His looks and manner did not escape unobserved. Every body remarked how ill and aged Mr. Ferrier was looking. The reports that had been circulated of late about his failing health had, it seemed, been only too true. It was a comfort, however, to reflect (they said) that he had so affectionate and devoted a wife; she would nurse him as no other would nor could. How touching it was to see those tender glances she cast toward him, which he had hardly the power to return! Then, again, after dinner, when the children were brought down, how delightfully they went to their step-mother! What a favorite she evidently was with them, and how excellently she behaved! Whatever happened, Mrs. Ferrier would certainly have nothing to reproach herself with. It was seldom one saw a match where there was such disproportion in the ages so pre-eminently a happy one; and, besides that, here were the children by the first wife as dear to the second as though they had been her own!

For all her anxiety, too, upon her husband's account—which was patent enough—how successfully she exerted herself as hostess! She suffered no shadow of her own trouble to fall upon that brilliant scene. It was only in conversation with one or two after dinner that she expressed

the extent of her solicitude about him, for which all agreed she had good cause. When the dancing began, he sent her in a little note by his valet to say that he had gone to bed—feeling somewhat fatigued, not ill—and that he did not wish to be disturbed. She communicated this intelligence to those about her: the host was duly sympathized with, but the ball proceeded none the less gayly for the absence of that gray pained face. Gwendoline made herself doubly attentive to her guests, and was seen in every part of the ballroom, but she did not dance. This was regretted, but it was no wonder. "She could have no spirits for that, poor thing!"

About midnight, and just before supper-time, she passed unnoticed into the conservatory, which happened to be deserted, lingered a few moments there, and then, slipping off her lace shawl, hung it on the corner of one of the flower-stands, so that any one passing by the richly curtained doorway would imagine she was still standing in her place. But she went out by a small door leading to a side staircase, and was away perhaps five minutes. Her absence was quite unnoticed; and she returned, resumed her scarf, and stood in the doorway looking at the dancers. Her color was high, but it was borrowed. Miss Blackett, who was sitting near—sharp-eyed, and, not having been asked to dinner, perhaps sharp-tempered—remarked upon this to her brother Alexander, who not only chivalrously undertook Gwendoline's defense, but almost instantly joined her. He never could see any thing amiss in Mrs. Ferrier.

Supper was a prolonged affair; and after supper dancing recommenced, and was continued far into the small hours. Not till the last guest had gone did Gwendoline retire to the dressing-room, where, since her husband was not to be disturbed, she was to sleep upon a sofa-bed. Her maid, of course, attended her, and it was strange how many things her mistress seemed to want that night, though all lay close at hand, and how disinclined she seemed to be left alone. When no other excuse was left to her for retaining the girl's services, she was suddenly attacked by toothache, so severe and excruciating that nobody with any feeling—certainly no servant with any respect for her mistress—could have deserted her in such a plight. Until day dawned, in fact, her maid never left Mrs. Ferrier's room, or lost sight of her for a single instant. It was harsh and exacting of Gwendoline, and quite foreign to her character as a mistress, to keep the poor girl up so, but her pain was so intense and continuous that no one could scarcely wonder at it; and, indeed, when the dull gray dawn had broadened into day, Gwendoline could stand it no longer, but bade her tap at Mr. Ferrier's door, and acquaint him with her pitiable condition.

It was then, for the first time in her life, that, had you seen Gwendoline, you would scarcely have thought her beautiful. With cheeks as white as the pillow on which they lay, she crouched in her sofa-bed like some hunted animal, watching with staring eyes and haggard face for the answer which did not come. "Knock again," said she, in a sort of hoarse and hissing whisper: "louder, louder." Then, "Open the door, and go in." And now she sat up in bed, a ghastly object indeed, such as no mere sleepless night could have made her, and listened

with awful intensity for the scream that she knew must come. And scream on scream from the terrified girl came soon enough. She was for flying down stairs, but her mistress sternly forbade it, and insisted upon her remaining—upon her accompanying her into the room where Mr. Ferrier lay a dead man, and had been lying dead for hours. The horror of that scene was far too shocking to be faced alone.

The house was easily roused, for some of the domestics had not thought it worth while to go to bed at all, and Dr. Gisborne was sent for. The news spread like wildfire at St. Medards; and one of the first who came to Glen Druid, on the heels of the doctor, was Susan Barland. She deeply regretted now that she had not accepted Mrs. Ferrier's invitation to sleep at Glen Druid the previous night, though what, indeed (as she asked herself at the same time), could she have done? As she entered the hall door, the servant was placing the letters in the post-bag, some of them, doubtless, bearing the sad news to Miss Ferrier and Sir Guy. Among them, Susan's sharp eye discovered a superscription in Mrs. Ferrier's handwriting, *The Hon. Piers Mostyn, Luttrell Hall*. A shudder ran through her honest frame as she caught sight of it. "She has written to her lover," groaned she to herself, "before her husband is cold. I always thought she was a wicked woman, and now I am sure of it. My poor old master is past help; all I can now pray is, *God help my poor lady's children*."

In this charge against Mrs. Ferrier, however, as we are aware, Mrs. Barland was not quite right: she was exaggerating matters. Gwendoline had almost finished her letter the night before, and that morning had only *added a postscript*.

CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE THE CORONER.

SIR GUY TREHERNE, who had left Glen Druid that very morning one of the latest guests, had not long finished his usual elaborate preparations for retiring to repose when he was called up again by an express from his daughter; and poor Adolphe had to see him through his still more elaborate toilet. The baronet was really shocked at the sad news; not that he had had any particular regard for his late son-in-law, but because Mr. Ferrier and himself were exactly of the same age; and one being thus suddenly removed, the other quaked for fear. In other respects, the occurrence was advantageous; for, however Gwendoline was left, she would undoubtedly have a great command of money. On the whole, paternal affection had never asserted itself within Sir Guy so powerfully as now. His daughter and himself—thus his reflections ran—had always been on the best of terms with one another; she had had the benefit of his best advice at all times, and he was now about to receive the reward of his fatherly care of her in a handsome annuity and in the settlement of his debts. He had lived at home of late, and had abstained from imposing his presence upon his son-in-law and daughter, because, yes—though Glen Druid did undoubtedly bore him—because man and wife were happier alone. Such delicate consideration and self-denial could not surely

have escaped Gwendoline's notice; and now, on the other hand, that she was bereaved and in trouble, he had not lost a moment in hastening to comfort her, though she must be well aware how repugnant it was to his feelings to pay a visit at such a time. He did not expect to find her inconsolable, nor did she pretend to be so; but she was evidently much moved by what had happened. Any one could see how difficult it was for her to maintain that deportment of decorous calm, and yet she did maintain it. Her nerves were shaken, for certainly Mr. Ferrier's death had been awfully sudden, though not *wholly* unexpected. All who had been at the dinner-party on the previous night had noticed how very ill their host had looked; all who had been at the ball were aware that he had absented himself from it on account of indisposition. It had been observed for months before that Mr. Ferrier was aging and ailing, and, in fact, gradually breaking up. Perhaps it was chiefly on account of his being struck down at the very moment when his hospitable roof was the scene of such gaiety that the occurrence excited any wonder at all. There was something so incongruous and horrible in the idea of his lying dead on his bed while his guests were dancing in the ballroom beneath; and yet this, by all accounts, must have actually been the case.

So much was already known of the circumstances of his decease; but there was much more, and worse, to be disclosed. Dr. Gisborne had come down, after his professional investigation, into the darkened sitting-room, where Sir Guy and Gwendoline were sitting, and was conversing with them upon the all-absorbing topic, but, as Mrs. Ferrier at once perceived, disconnectedly and abstractedly. Her father, exceedingly ill at ease himself, and out of his element, did not observe it. The doctor winked at him in his most sagacious manner, but he took no notice. He beckoned to him stealthily; but Sir Guy, imagining this to be some gesture of woe, had only replied, "Yes, indeed," in mournful tones, and shaken his head till his teeth rattled in their golden settings. At last Gwendoline expressed a wish to see how the dear children were, and departing for the nursery, left the two gentlemen to themselves.

"My dear Sir Guy," exclaimed the doctor, "I have been endeavoring to catch your eye for the last ten minutes. I have something very serious and private to tell you, and which I can not bring myself to speak of in your daughter's presence. I have just come down from our poor friend yonder"—he pointed to the room above them—"having made a most terrible discovery." The doctor looked cautiously round, and sank his voice to a whisper: "Mr. Ferrier has died of poison."

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated the baronet, piously.

"Yes, sir; he has taken prussic acid—by mistake, of course; but it is my duty to send, and at once, to the coroner."

"The coroner? You don't mean to tell me that you will ask him to hold an inquest at Glen Druid? Why, good heavens, sir, my son-in-law is not like a miner who dies of fire-damp, that he is to be identified, and investigated, and reported upon. How dare you dream of such a thing?"

as the first time throughout the long interval between these two men that the baron ever shown himself in his true colors: 1 of Pride was roused within him, and his was haughty and offensive to the last

Gisborne turned pale, but it was certainly 1 fear.

"We are doing something, Sir Guy, which I new you to do before: you are *forgetting* . . . sneer was lost upon the baronet in his ire.

"*getting myself!* It is you, sir, who are *g yourself*, and also whom you are ad-

"*g*, sir, I know him very well; and if the are fitting, and if it were not that a dead ying up stairs, whose fate is crying aloud mediate inquiry, I would describe him to y literally. Do not think to bully *me*, Sir The meanest miner who ever perished in lack was a better man than you are ev-; and could not have been less of a gen-

Guy got up with trembling limbs, and e bell. "Lord Chillington called you a apothecary," cried he, "and so you are. e any authority in this house, you shall ed out of it this instant."

you venture to speak one insolent word ing me before a servant," said Dr. Gis- 1rmly, "I will have the police in the efore nightfall."

1 the bell was answered, it was the doc- not Sir Guy, who gave his orders.

William get ready at once to ride to St. s and take a letter." The man bowed

h drew. "You are well advised, Sir Guy, aining your temper, or that note would en written, not to the coroner, but to the 1endent of constabulary. Do not suppose

n like you are above the law. On the y, if it were not for the law, they would n be permitted to exist—to encumber th at all. I shall do my duty in this

you may be sure, sir, moved by no con- ons whatever except those of humanity."

with that the doctor marched out of the aving Sir Guy in a piteous state of dis-

re. It was not only that he had got the f the encounter, but he had quarreled—

haps irrevocably—with the only medical o thoroughly understood his dilapidated

tion. ough Dr. Gisborne had expressed himself, h truth, as being swayed in the matter of

to the coroner by his sense of public s was not quite the Brutus that he ap-

He felt quite as keenly as Sir Guy what rtune and inconvenience the affair was

o prove, and especially what an addition l be to the trouble of the poor widow.

endoline's sake, the doctor would have y thing that was not contrary to his con-

and, even as matters were, there had sharp struggle between him and it. He

more angry with Sir Guy, both by rea- t the objections to having a coroner's in-

Glen Druid had struck himself also with ll force, and for the moment had almost

him to conceal the result of his investi-

gations above-stairs. By the dead man's side he had found a little table, upon which stood a wine-glass, a carafe of water half full, a bottle of ordinary cough mixture, and another which had contained prussic acid; and he had only to lean over those cold lips to know who had emptied that deadly phial. He had not, as we have seen, the heart to communicate such news to Gwendoline herself, nor did he ever tell her with his own mouth, though, of course, she heard it soon enough from other sources. It was a very different thing to have regaled her with sensational incidents of human life in the abstract, and to enter into these details which had so near and terrible an application to herself. Whoever undertook the task of narration, however, she bore it wonderfully, though none could watch that calm white face, with the cruel twitchings at the corners of the fair mouth, and doubt that she suffered deeply. Even the coroner's jury (for, of course, it came to that) were moved to admiration at Mrs. Ferrier's quiet self-control. Their examination of the servants had elucidated almost every thing, but still they were obliged to call her before them. Some would perhaps have spared her the ordeal, if more were curious to see how the beautiful young widow would acquit herself under such circumstances; but the coroner ruled that they must take her evidence. It had already been proved that Mr. Ferrier had retired early on the night in question, with injunctions that he should not be disturbed. He had not complained of any illness except a slight cough; but Billiter—the valet—had noticed how very unwell he looked. He had placed the cough mixture and the wineglass upon the table by his master's orders, but not the other bottle, nor the carafe. When he left Mr. Ferrier there was still a light in the room, but it was not his master's custom when alone to keep a light burning at night.

Billiter was asked no farther questions, for Dr. Gisborne's evidence had already explained the presence of the prussic acid. He said that Mr. Ferrier had for some time entertained the idea that he had heart disease, and although he (the witness) considered him quite mistaken—as was now proved without a doubt—he had prescribed for him a drop of prussic acid in a wine-glass of water whenever he was troubled by the palpitations. In the doctor's distress and trouble upon Gwendoline's account—for he knew that she would have to be called presently—he quite omitted to mention (and indeed to remember) that he had never been consulted by the deceased himself, or that the prescription which had proved so fatal had been written at the instance of Mrs. Ferrier. It was evident to all that the invalid had placed the phial of prussic acid by his side after Billiter had left him, and then, perhaps forgetting its presence altogether, had poured out in the dark the contents of the one bottle instead of the other. It was a most unfortunate and shocking occurrence, but clearly an accident, for which no blame could attach to any body.

Mrs. Ferrier, however, was sent for in her turn. She came in leaning on her father's arm, but not as if she needed any support. Her quiet dignity impressed the assembly, for each was thinking to himself how much it must have cost her to maintain it. Her last act before she entered the room had been, it was said, to embrace Mr. Ferrier's

children. She was habited, of course, in deep black, and every body said—which always happened when she wore a new style of dress—that she had never looked so beautiful before. She gave her evidence with clearness, and without a tear, although her voice at times failed her. She produced the last note that her husband had ever written to her. “MY DEAR GWENDOLINE,—I am not very well to-night, and have retired to my room; *do not let me be disturbed.*” Then she gave much the same testimony concerning the events of the night as had been already given by the maid. “Unfortunately, I never saw my dear husband after he left the ball-room,” said she, “or I should have removed the prussic acid; I was quite aware of the dangerous character of those drops. Dr. Gisborne gave me due warning of it, and I invariably administered them to Mr. Ferrier with my own hands. Upon this occasion, in my absence, he must have taken a dose himself, or placed the phial by his pillow, in case he wished to do so. I can come to no other conclusion than that, in the dark, and when troubled by his cough, he mistook the poison for the mixture.”

That was the opinion at which every body else, or almost every body, had arrived already, and a verdict in accordance with it was therefore pronounced by the jury. The single exception was an insignificant one, being no other than Mrs. Barland, who, besides, had already showed an ill feeling toward the principal person concerned. Upon this occasion, however, she manifested no open hostility, but confided her suspicions to her husband only. She insisted—without meeting with much encouragement from the philosophic Samuel to do so—upon reviewing the whole history of the Ferrier family with great gravity of manner, and some tediousness of detail. “I have been thinking a deal about it, Samuel, and you mark my words: there has been some”—she hesitated, for she was prudent even with her prudent spouse—“some mischief at work, such as it takes two people to hatch.”

“Two people?” exclaimed her husband, removing the beloved pipe from his silent lips. “Hollo, you are a-going it! I thought it was all a-coming round to poor Mrs. Ferrier.”

“Poor Mrs. Ferrier!” ejaculated Susan, angrily; “why, I do believe you are as great a fool as the rest of the men. What is she to be pitied for, I should like to know?”

“Well, to be sure, not much,” rejoined Mr. Barland, with an injured air, “for she’s only lost her husband.”

“You know I don’t mean *that*, Samuel; only you do annoy me by defending the woman just because she has a pretty face. Now do be serious, and listen to me.”

“I have smoked three pipes already, my dear, while you have been talking. I thought you had done, but I can still smoke another.”

“I have only been telling you what has taken place, Samuel; I now want to show you what I make of it.”

“Oh, I see. ‘The learned judge proceeded to sum up’—and dead against the accused, I’ll warrant.”

“Against both the accused, Samuel,” said Susan, gravely; “for how could Miss Treherne have ever known as my poor mistress was like to die, and that the opportunity would be afforded of

her getting into her shoes, if it had not been for Dr. Gisborne? And why did Dr. Gisborne conceal what he knew about her health, except that he was persuaded to do it by Miss Treherne?”

“You are now accusing the most just-minded, as well as the kindest-hearted man in the county, Susan. You have certainly a talent for picking holes in the characters of those who are general favorites.”

“What chance has Justice with you men where a pretty woman pleads against her?” answered Susan, sharply. “Why, as for the doctor’s kindness of heart—which I don’t deny—that, of course, makes him all the weaker in such a case. No, no, there is something wrong here, Samuel. Perhaps Dr. Gisborne deceives himself as much as any body in the matter, but he has certainly deceived others. He played false with my dear mistress, and pretended he was doing her good, when he knew her disease was mortal, and no help could avail; and now there has been another deception, and perhaps a worse one. How is it that—so far as I can make out—not a soul ever heard that Mr. Ferrier *had* heart disease except from his wife? You told me you did not think there was much the matter with him yourself; and Billiter, his valet, tells me he never knew as he took drops at all, whereas three bottles have gone up from your own hands to Glen Druid, and for that matter Mrs. Ferrier called for them in the carriage herself. Now, how do you account for that, Samuel?”

“For Mrs. Ferrier’s calling in the carriage, or what, my dear?”

“You know what, very well. I ask you, don’t you think it strange that nobody ever heard of Mr. Ferrier’s having heart disease except his wife? Why didn’t he ever speak of it himself?”

“Well Susan, folks are queer in a many ways,” was the sententious reply. “Moreover”—here he filled his pipe—“they are queerer about illness than any thing else. Why, some people lay more store on hiding what is the matter with them—and especially if it is of a sort to take them off sudden—than they do of getting well of it, and that was very like the case with Mr. Ferrier.” And with that Mr. Samuel Barland rose and yawned, as though he had heard enough of the Ferrier family for that night.

“Perhaps you are right,” said Susan, dutifully; but, ere the conversation turned to another topic, she muttered to herself, “and yet I say again, God help my poor lady’s children.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN APT PUPIL.

ONE of the first duties which, notwithstanding her distress and trouble, the new-made widow decided to put into effect, was to write to Miss Judith Ferrier, and invite her down to Glen Druid before the funeral. It was, every body said, a most thoughtful act, and one which did her the utmost credit. It was well known that the relations between her late husband and his sister had not been so amicable as they ought to have been; Gwendoline herself had more than once expressed regret that she could not persuade him to use conciliatory measures; and now that the time for reconciliation was past, she used

the occasion of his death to hold out a friendly hand to this unknown lady. Nothing (every body said) was certainly now to be gained by it; and from what had been heard of this North British relative, the acquaintanceship could scarcely be desirable in any way. But it was a point of social duty, and Mrs. Ferrier was not the one to overlook it. Miss Judith, preceded by a cold and guarded acceptance of her invitation, interlarded with pious phrases, and not without complaints of the manner in which she had been treated by "poor Bruce," arrived in due course, and did not belie expectation. A tall and bony virgin of fifty-five, with a turn for criticism upon all subjects save those to which criticism usually confines itself, and a frequent swift expression of disapprobation, was scarcely the sort of guest to mitigate the melancholy that overhung Glen Druid. But it was not Judith Ferrier's mission to mitigate melancholy, but to improve the occasion, and (if possible) her newly-found sister-in-law. She came, of course, with most unfavorable impressions of her, and fully aware of the great need of improvement in which she stood. She had heard nothing but evil of her from her correspondent, Susan Barland, and she had her own opinion (and it was a bad one) of her ill-assorted marriage with "poor Bruce;" but, on the other hand, there was this invitation—a tardy peace-offering indeed, but still most courteously and respectfully worded, and which, after all, she might reasonably enough, in accordance with her late husband's views, have omitted to send. Moreover, Gwendoline at least compared favorably with that poor, lost Italian woman, Giulia. She was not a foreigner, nor a papist, and what was quite as important in Judith's eyes, though she would have gone to the stake rather than confess it, she was the daughter of a real live baronet, now on view (for a limited period) at Glen Druid. The curious inconsistency that manifests itself so strongly in what is called the religious world, to bow down before the idol of rank, no matter of what very inferior clay its feet may be composed of, was very marked in Judith Ferrier.

There are not many noblemen, nor even baronets, dwelling in Glasgow, and, if the truth must be told, she had never yet sat at the same dinner-table with a person of title. She was a good woman, for all her narrowness of view and conventional virtue; she had an honest and kind heart, and a strong, if at times mistaken, sense of duty. She was really touched at the awfully sudden summons which her brother had received to the Supreme Court on High, and for her part (notwithstanding her complaining letter), she had at once forgiven him all his trespasses against her; but it was a fact that, on arriving at that house where he still lay dead, the prominent reflection in her mind was that Sir Guy Treherne, of Bedivere Court, would that evening take her in to dinner. The children, of course, excited in her considerable interest, although she took it in dudgeon that they bore unmistakable marks of their foreign origin in coloring and complexion. Their hair was dark, and their skin was olive, whereas they ought to have been blondes, as all the Ferriers were. Her own hair, it was true, was no longer golden; but Art had opposed for her the harsh decrees of Time, and supplied her with an auburn front. In this, and with a breast-

plate formed of one of the largest cairngorms that her native country ever produced, she did not despair of captivating Sir Guy. The baronet, on his part, did not discourage her, for he understood that for some reason, to him incomprehensible, his daughter wished to conciliate this female portent, and he set himself to do so accordingly. Never, probably, did two people sit next to one another at the same board with fewer subjects of conversation in common than Miss Judith and himself; but she had come to worship, and he had only to accept the incense with graciousness and gravity. A smile under the circumstances would have been destruction, and yet—for a sense of humor was one of the few virtues he possessed—he had never felt more inclined for mirth; her attire, her accent, and, above all, her adulation of himself, tickled his very heart-strings. He thought of his debts, however, and kept his countenance. Surely Gwendoline would pay them, and especially since he was so strenuously exerting himself to advance her interests; and every now and then he stole an appealing glance at his daughter, to let her know what he was suffering for her sake.

Gwendoline herself, who had no title to Miss Judith's respect, was treated by that inflexible maiden with great sternness. For a whole week she called her "Mrs. Ferrier," and maintained a reserve as chilling as silence and monosyllables could make it. But at last, as the drop of water wears away the stone, the unvarying respect and deference which her hostess showed her began to thaw her heart, and take the starch out of her manner. It was impossible that wrath should not be turned away by such soft answers as were always given to her. Her opinion concerning the management of the children, and even of the household, was asked, and followed; and even her religious ideas, no matter at what length they were expanded, were listened to with the most exemplary patience. But what was most effective of all was the ready acquiescence which Gwendoline exhibited in her sister-in-law's views with respect to Mr. Ferrier's will. Judith had years ago been very comfortably provided for by her brother, and of course had neither chick (for she lived in the heart of Glasgow) nor child, but still she deeply resented the omission of her name from "poor Bruce's" testament. "I did not want his money, my dear" (she had actually said "my dear" on this occasion); "but he might have left something, as it must strike even yourself, by way of remembrance to his own kith and kin."

"My dear Miss Ferrier," returned Gwendoline, "I am more pleased than I can say to hear you speak upon this subject, because it shows that you feel quite at your ease with me, as I wish you to do."

This was a bold stroke, for Judith might have replied with truth that she should have spoken her mind on the matter in question at all events; injustice being a thing she never "put up with," without protest; but the antagonistic and self-asserting stage was passed, and she only bowed with gravity.

"My dear husband left me many costly ornaments," continued Mrs. Ferrier, "which I value only for his sake. It would be doing me a real favor—although, as respects yourself, it would be but taking your due—if you would select from

them such articles as you please." And she instantly led the way to her dressing-room, and laid the contents of her jewel-box before the astonished Judith. There was nothing quite so big as the cairngorm, but there was also nothing that was not ten times as valuable. Miss Judith's eyes glistened; they had never looked upon such riches before; she had not even dreamed of such, for her bringing up had been in the strictest sense of the Pharisees, and the *Arabian Nights* had been a book tabooed.

Though her nature was acquisitive, it was not, however, rapacious, and she took but a moderate share of what was offered to her. Had she taken half, Gwendoline would not have considered it too great a price to pay for her sister-in-law's favor, which by this act she had completely secured. Notwithstanding this, she did not cease to cultivate it. Miss Ferrier had all the attention, so dear to ancient maiden ladies, paid to her by her hostess which respectful solicitude could suggest. Some scheme was every day devised for her amusement, and she was never suffered, by being left alone, to imagine herself neglected. Mrs. Ferrier herself, when not engaged with the children, of whom she was laboriously careful, was her constant companion. Nor was this, strange as it may seem, so irksome to Gwendoline as solitude had now become. If not with Judith or in the nursery, she, who had once been, so self-reliant and independent of society, must now be closeted with her lawyer, or even exchanging small-talk with her waiting-maid. When perforce left alone, she either drugged herself to sleep with laudanum, or busied herself in writing to Piers.

This latter occupation was not so pleasurable as might, under the circumstances, have been expected. Piers Mostyn had not received the news that she was a free woman with such enthusiasm as he (surely) ought to have done, considering that he was aware how hateful her bondage had been to her. There was even a half-hesitating expression of wonder in his reply, that she could have written so ardently of the future so very soon. It was terrible to see her when, locked within her boudoir, she tore open the letter which she imagined would be full of passionate ecstasy, and read those words—her wrath and bitterness broke forth without restraint. "Was it for this man, with his meagre conventionalities, that she had become the Thing she had?" Although it was impossible that he could guess *what* she had done and suffered, he knew that she had suffered, and for his sake, and should have surely sent some acknowledgment of her past, some congratulation on her present—expressed some delight at the prospect of their common future. But he had done none of these things, at all events in the way which she had a right to expect. In her bitter wrath, she even reviled him with such terms as indeed were very fitting, but which were torture to her to have to frame, for she loved this man after her fierce fashion still, and if it was otherwise there was no drawing back now. She had but him to cling to, and if he failed her—but he would not fail her; she clung to that with the tenacity of despair.

Was it fear, remorse, regret, which fed upon her very vitals, and made her whole existence a nightmare dream? Not any one of them, and

yet, perhaps, all of them—she had only to be left alone to be consumed with vague horrors and forebodings. But in the presence of others she became at once herself, and played her part to admiration. She took no advantage of the privilege of seclusion granted to women in her bereaved condition, but was always at the service of her guest, or ready to attend to household affairs. The golden opinions she had won from all as a wife acquired a new brightness from her behavior as a widow—nay, as we have seen, her patient conciliation even disarmed her foe; and when Susan Barland gave utterance to some discouraging remark concerning her in the presence of Miss Ferrier, instead of meeting with the sympathy from her patroness and fellow-countrywoman which she had been led to expect, she received a sharp rebuke.

On the other hand, while Gwendoline had thus effected an alliance with one out of the only two persons who might be called her enemies, she broke with one who, after his fashion, had hitherto been her friend. He had been useful to her in a certain way, but he would no longer be so, and perhaps she was not sorry for the opportunity he himself afforded her of giving him what he would have called his *congé*, and Mr. Barland "the sack."

Yearning for the delights of the metropolis, but yet not possessed of a sufficiently long purse to make all its pleasures attainable, Sir Guy resolved to make his first inroad into that exchequer which he fondly hoped (though, truth to say, he was not without his misgivings to the contrary) was to be henceforth a common one between himself and his daughter. She sought his society as he did that of every body else, and there was therefore no difficulty in finding a fit time to speak. The place happened to be that walk round the Warrior's Helm, which has already formed the scene of more than one confidential meeting between the personages of our story. The hour was three in the afternoon, when Miss Judith Ferrier had retired, as her custom was, for a siesta; for at Glasgow she had been wont to dine early, and take her "forty winks," before she combined recreation and reflection by a walk in the grounds of the cemetery; and at Glen Druid, where the fare was better, she could not resist making the same heavy noonday meal, notwithstanding that she dined again at 7.30. Sir Guy and Gwendoline were therefore quite alone.

"My dear daughter," said he, impressively, but not apropos of any thing particular, "we have both of us had so much to think about of late, and so much to do" (this was a delicate hint at his own exertions to conciliate Miss Ferrier), "that I have not yet congratulated you upon your present position of wealth and independence. You may imagine, however, what pride it gives your father to see you on the threshold of life in the possession of all that makes life pleasant."

"Thank you, papa," said Gwendoline, coldly. "I am not about to remind you, my dear, of what you owe to me, first, because nothing can be owed by a child to her father; and, secondly, because I am sure it would be quite unnecessary to put the matter as a *claim* at all; but the fact is, it would be a great convenience to me if you would let me have a little money to free me from a

temporary embarrassment—five hundred pounds, or so, would be amply sufficient for the present.”

“For the present, papa, it might,” was Gwendoline’s measured reply. “But I know you well enough to be aware that, if I gave you this sum, there would be practically no end to such applications; moreover, it would lead to a misunderstanding with respect to our mutual relations, which you yourself—if you remember—explained to me once in the clearest manner.”

Art had rendered it impossible for the baronet to turn pale, but his dull eyes gleamed with anger, and his hands, which never were quite still, trembled excessively.

“You are welcome to Glen Druid whenever you please to come, papa,” she went on; “but my banker’s book is my private property. You have always taught me how necessary it is to look after one’s self, and I have profited by your lessons. You are quite right in saying that I owe you nothing, and in making no claims. You have no claim upon me whatsoever. You left me to shift for myself; I have done so, and I mean to do so now that the shifts are no longer hard.”

Sir Guy, whose feeble legs shook under him with passion, sat down on a slab of rock, and regarded his daughter malignly, without speaking. Gwendoline, on her part, affected to consider the topic at an end. “What an ink-black cloud is rising in the west, yonder; there will presently be a storm. Had we not better seek the house?”

“You may go, but I shall not,” returned the baronet, hoarsely. “I will never set foot in your house again, ungrateful, unnatural girl! Is it possible you are my own flesh and blood?”

“This is mere melodrama,” replied Gwendoline, harshly; “a rôle you are quite unfit to play, papa. Besides, you are inconsistent. I was not less your flesh and blood, I suppose, when you washed your hands of me. Come, come; I think you know me better than to use such arguments; and I am sure, papa, quite sure, that I know you.”

It was impossible to imagine a tone more chilling and contemptuous than that in which she spoke, or one more barren of the expectations to which her father looked.

Sir Guy, savage and snubbed, perceived that the affair was hopeless.

“I have heard of the heartlessness of *speculators*,” said he, with bitter emphasis, “but I could not have believed in such conduct as this. Henceforth, it seems, I am to possess no daughter; but ere I leave you, Goneril, let me discharge one last duty—give you one last warning—beware of fortune-hunters, who have not only no claims (such as you deny me), but who will have no scruples.”

“Thank you, papa,” said Gwendoline, smiling (she had weighed the possible consequences of his putting his threat of leaving her roof upon the instant into execution, and not, perhaps, without some passionate reviling spoken to other ears, and had found them serious); “and, in return for that valuable advice of yours, I will let you have the sum you mention—this once. Perhaps, after all, considering what my London outfit may have cost you, it is your due. But henceforth, remember, our accounts are balanced; your acceptance of this money is to be a receipt in full. It is coming on to rain, papa, as I expected; let me offer you my arm to the house.”

“I prefer to walk alone,” answered Sir Guy, gloomily.

And they returned within doors by separate ways.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT LAST.

HOWEVER wise, in a worldly point of view, Gwendoline might be in thus cutting off her relations with Sir Guy, his withdrawal from Glen Druid left her more companionless, and therefore more wretched, even than before. How could the weary, weary time ever be whiled away till she should once more see Piers Mostyn—have his beloved self to interpose between her and the furies that pursued her! She was frantically eager for his presence, but he was abroad just now, and seemed to her to prolong his stay there needlessly. In one sense, she was right. He might, of course, have come to England, and even have met her, if he chose. But he felt quite sure of her, and sure of her late husband’s money, and he had no wish to be tempted to do any thing which might get themselves “talked about,” and endanger their future position in society. With respect to this sort of forethought, indeed, it seemed that the two had changed places—characters. It was Piers who was all for prudence now: a man has many methods of making the time pass pleasantly which are denied to the other sex; and the reflection that he was enjoying himself, or, at all events, not suffering one tittle of the wretchedness that consumed her, did not tend to console his would-be bride.

To stay at Glen Druid any longer at last became impossible to her; her life there—dull and yet deceptive—was growing insupportable, while, when not actually playing her part, she was a prey to nervous terrors. An actress without rest, or even natural sleep! It was insupportable, and she felt that it was driving her mad. She suddenly resolved to move to London; there, at least, would be amusement, distraction from thought, and mitigation of Miss Ferrier’s twaddle. She did not even call in person to thank her neighbors for their “kind inquiries,” but sent round cards with an inch deep of black edging; it was understood that she was not “equal” to such an ordeal, and that Dr. Gisborne had recommended immediate change of scene. Her now completely won-over sister-in-law was by no means averse to accompany her. She honestly believed that Glasgow was the finest city in the universe, as it most unquestionably was the most pious, but still she was not so prejudiced but that she had some desire to see its rival, London. Moreover, it was a novel and most exquisite sensation to her to travel and be lodged and boarded at somebody else’s expense. The whole party—for, of course, the children were taken by their anxious step-mother—put up at a fashionable hotel in a Mayfair square, which was in itself a rare treat to Judith. She had never staid at a hotel before; to put one’s head into such an establishment had been, in her view of domestic economy, to be half ruined; to have a meal therein was to “eat gold.” Of course they were neither so well lodged nor fed—there are not half a dozen hotels in London where a good

dinner is to be got, unless you measure excellence by price—as at Glen Druid, and the horses and carriages were very inferior; but still the reflection that every thing cost a mint of money, and that she had not to pay one shilling of it, filled her with a fearful joy. To do her justice, she had offered to subscribe her share, which she had modestly estimated at thirty-seven shillings and sixpence a week; but Gwendoline had met this offer with such a dignified refusal that she never recurred to it again.

Perhaps Mrs. Ferrier made more sure of Judith by this little bit of well-judged liberality than by all those previous efforts at conciliation which had cost her so much. If so, that was her only gain in coming to town; such grave amusements as she could enter into in correct Judith's company bored and oppressed her to the last degree. Black Care sat behind her wherever she moved; and in the midst of London life she neither lost forgetfulness of the past nor anxiety for the future. What was Piers Mostyn doing? and why did he still delay to fly to her, even though she was now in town, and out of the reach of prying gossips? She was quite unaware that the tone of her own letters did much toward keeping him at a distance. Piers was by no means a dull man, and he had much experience of women. He knew of what they are capable when actuated either by love or hate, and in Gwendoline's ardent sentences he detected now and then a certain desperation which alarmed him. If he were to obey her impatient summons, she would, as likely as not, make a fool of herself. Under the circumstances, she ought not to have the opportunity of being "demonstrative." Let her stop for a few months longer with Judy—as he persisted in calling the respectable Miss Ferrier—who seemed a quiet old personage, and very well adapted to take charge of her. Besides the desperation, too, and in curious contrast with it, there was something hard, and almost morose, in Gwendoline's letters, which suggested some enigma to him, though without any hint at its solution; and Piers did not like enigmas. Upon the whole, he resolved for the present to stop where he was, at Geneva, or, at all events, not to come to London.

But Gwendoline was equally determined that they should meet, and that at once. By return of post a letter arrived from Dr. Gisborne, in reply to a communication from herself, with a strong recommendation that she should go abroad. There was nothing like a thorough change of scene for one whose nerves had been so terribly tried as hers had been, and the symptoms of which she wrote were exactly those which evidenced that the constitution was suffering from mental causes. Switzerland was as good a place as she could go to. He could not say that it would be any particular benefit to the children; but there was no reason why it should hurt them while the summer lasted. As for the exact locality, they might all go to Lucerne (for instance), and the sooner the better. Before Gwendoline placed this letter in her sister-in-law's hands, she had carefully paved the way for its reception. Instead of keeping her sufferings (which were real enough) to herself, as heretofore, she had let them be seen, and excited Judith's sympathy. "You can't be well, my dear," Miss Ferrier had observed; "and I do wish you would consult somebody. It's no use throwing

away your guineas upon London physicians, who don't understand your constitution; but sit down at once, and write to Dr. Gisborne, who will give you the best advice for nothing at all."

The good lady, however, little imagined that the prescription would have taken this particular form. She, for her part, was very well content with London; her simple fancy was easily pleased; and even to see her name every week in the *Morning Post* as still resident in the Mayfair Square Hotel had an unspeakable charm for her. Moreover, she detested "foreign parts." In her eyes, the shadow of popery darkened more or less every Continental nation, and to venture under it was to be influenced by it in spite of one's self. To do her justice, she was moved not only by the reflection of the unpleasant change which such apostasy might create in her own prospects for the future; she was "looked up to" by many faithful people in Glasgow, and any backsliding of hers would have weight with others. If the pope were to make a convert of Judith Ferrier, the blow to Protestantism in that city would be very considerable. He would probably, therefore, spare no effort to accomplish this object; and was it right in her, she argued, to give him the chance? Upon these elevated grounds, she declined, point-blank, to cross the Channel; and Gwendoline, from her inability to rise to the same plane, found it exceedingly difficult to combat them. But she had not gone through so much, since she had become a widow, to conciliate this good lady, and secure her moral support, to be vanquished in this last struggle. She had sheltered herself thus far under heregis of respectability; and she could not afford in this, the most dangerous act she had yet ventured upon, to do without its protection. Her sister-in-law must be carried abroad somehow, and give the sanction of her presence to the meeting between herself and Piers. One would have thought it almost impossible that Judith Ferrier would have been a marketable commodity any where, or under any circumstances; and yet, as it so happened, she had become of the greatest possible social value. Her rigid virtue, so far from being only its own reward, was worth at least five hundred pounds in hard cash—and fetched it. Gwendoline was compelled to treat the affair as a matter of business, and at the same time to show the obligation would be on her own side. She painted in glowing colors the advantage which the children, as well as herself, enjoyed from Judith's companionship, and adjured her not to withdraw it. It would be unreasonable, indeed, to expect her to sacrifice herself to others for nothing, and if she (Gwendoline) went abroad without her, it would be necessary for her to engage, at a large stipend, some other lady as chaperon, so that the money must be spent either way. Why, then, should Miss Ferrier refuse to accept it, and, which was of more moment, shrink from the task of defending her little niece from that insidious foe, Romanism, to the attacks of which her tender age and impressionable nature would be especially exposed? For herself, Gwendoline acknowledged that she was but an indifferent spiritual pastor. Would Judith Ferrier, then, abandon the Lamb to the Wolf because she feared for her own faith? Gwendoline could never believe that.

Nor were other arguments wanting of consid-

power of a heterogeneous kind. The five pound check was, as we have hinted, out its influence, especially as, so far from considered as a bribe, it was only an inequitable requital for services to be rendered. A passage would be taken on a fine day, between the nearest opposite points of the land. They were to stay nowhere where as not a Lutheran chapel, or, at all events, a stant service upon the Sabbath; and she, Ferrier, was never to be asked to join in religious bathing. Among the information giving foreign parts of which she had possessed herself, was the fact that there were no chamber-doors in foreign parts; and one of the five hundred pounds was, in consequence, invested in a door-fastener of gigantic and subtle workmanship, which subsequently excited no little suspicion when the luggage was examined by the French authorities. One of the smaller penalties which egoists have to pay, that not only does it soon diminish the sense of humor, but after a while even the pleasure derived from cynicism; and Gwendoline could not but have been in accordance with the opinions and observations of her English companion. That lady may have been mistaken in her views of politics when she wished to know why the arms of England had not been turned to the useful purpose of compelling nations to learn and speak our language; her remarks upon the table-d'hôte *potages*, of meat floating in melted butter and waded on the *rôtis*, were really worthy of praise. "How was it," said she, "that though in the flesh what seemed to have been boilings, they never saw the soups that those just at some remote period have made?" and, indeed, through disgust at these plainness and avoidance of the *entrées*, through fear of being a frog in them, Miss Ferrier contented herself with eating to discretion, and even in precaution she did not preserve herself from the frightful experience of partaking of an apple cake at the Verviers Railway Station, a memory of which, if not the actual taste of it, was united with her to her dying day. At the frontier, when they inquired if she had anything to declare, it was with difficulty she could be restrained from stating her grievances; while her passport—without which she imagined herself to be liable to the fate of Trenck or Silvio Pellico—was on no account extracted from her save at the point of duet. Then, after each day of alien opposition and stubborn resistance, to hear her contents on the comfortless plan of the bedsteads, on the little slop-basins in which she was expected to wash, and on the table-napkins, upon which balls all round them, which served as bowls, would have moved Memnon to smiles. Gwendoline there was no such innocent person, no distraction from thought in change of scene or of people; no pleasure, no rest. The journey itself was but another and more tedious mode of travel than the railway. Her gaze rested on a castle and tower, on road and river, on vineyard and vineyard, with the same absent air; and her eye only beheld one object for which she had neither regret nor remorse—so called—but she felt that, until that object arrived at, she should be wretched. She

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was, however, getting very near it now. They had taken up their abode at Lucerne, and Piers Mostyn was no farther off than Geneva.

The party were very welcome at the *Schweizer Hof*, although it was the height of the season. They had taken the best rooms that were to be got, and it was understood that they were to reside for a considerable time. Gwendoline and Miss Ferrier did not, however, dine in their own apartments, but at the table d'hôte; and all who patronized it soon began to rave about the young Englishwoman, so beautiful and so rich, who was reported to be such an exemplary step-mother, and was certainly the most quiet and sedate of widows who ever—for some unexplained reason—found it impossible to live at home. Without gossip, even Swiss scenery falls upon polite society—besides that, upon wet days, one has really nothing else to fall back upon—and a favorite topic of conversation among the English portion of the frequenters of the table d'hôte was the high play and reckless libertinism of the Honorable Piers Mostyn, who, it seemed, had acquired quite a Continental reputation in that way. The news did not greatly disturb Gwendoline. In the first place, since she knew his character so thoroughly, she was quite prepared for such intelligence; and, secondly, she reflected that the more dissolutely he lived, the more he would be in want of money, and the sooner he would therefore be necessitated to apply to the sole source whence he could now obtain it.

On the receipt of Gwendoline's first summons from Lucerne, however, Piers made up his mind to obey it; but he sent before him a letter full of such advice as made her pale cheek flush. She was adjured to receive him—if their meeting should take place, as it was very likely to do, in public—with quiet coldness, and to evince a careless surprise, as though the *rencontre* had been quite unpremeditated. It was all important, he urged, as respected their future position, that they should be prudent now, and especially on such an occasion. The idea of being schooled as to social behavior by any human being—much more by a roused and gambler such as Piers—would, a few months back, have made her lip curl with bitterest contempt. But it was not so now. It did not even yet occur to her that the passionate tone of her own letters had made her lover doubtful of her self-command; but, what was worse, she felt that his warning was not needless. She was no longer the woman of three years ago, who had dismissed him from her side, notwithstanding his fond entreaties, to execute a far-sighted scheme that in the end should bring them nearer. The scheme had succeeded, and she was greedy to pluck the fruit of it. For three long years she had played the hypocrite, and she eagerly longed (as though it had been possible!) to be once more herself again; for three long years she had worn the fetters of convention, and she ardently yearned to enjoy her freedom with him for whose sake she had become a slave. No new plighted innocent girl ever awaited the coming of her beloved one with so intense a desire as was consuming her. Every day, every hour of enforced deceit increased it: she had earned her wages—none knew save herself by what toil and trouble, none guessed by what remorse and despair, and her heart urgently demanded payment at once and in full. Long habit of dissimulation

had made her part with others easy enough to play; but she mistrusted her own powers in the presence of him for whose sake she had abandoned nature for the stage.

This woman, too, whose countenance she had at so great a sacrifice secured, would be a spectator only too likely to be critical, and perhaps even suspicious. Piers was already on his way—he had preferred to make the journey on foot, perhaps, as she bitterly thought, for the very purpose of delay, and might now come across them at any moment—in their drives, their walks, their boating excursions, abroad or within doors. Would it be possible to receive him as she had once so easily made up her mind to do, in that seemingly so far back time, when it was he who was rash, and she who was prudent? When any new object of beauty or of interest was pointed out to her, as among those fair scenes it often was, even by her unimpulsive companion, she flushed and started, notwithstanding all her efforts at self-control. The reflection that Miss Ferrier had not so much as known of Piers Mostyn's existence a week ago, and could certainly not identify him as her lover, was useless to restrain her. As lake, and forest, and mountain were nothing to *her*, who only looked for Piers, so she thought it must be with others.

At last the long-looked-for meeting took place, and, as generally happens in such cases, under circumstances quite unexpected. They were taking their places at the table d'hôte as usual, when Miss Ferrier whispered to her, "What a very handsome young man that is, my dear, who has just come in!"

Gwendoline looked up toward the doorway of the *salle à manger* carelessly enough, and there stood Piers.

CHAPTER XXV.

MISS FERRIER'S DAVID.

CONTRARY to her own expectations, and in excess of her hope, Gwendoline was fully equal to the occasion. She did not, indeed, venture to meet Piers Mostyn's glance, as, after roving from face to face down the long line of table-guests, it settled, with a gleam of rapturous delight (for her beauty, which had increased rather than diminished, fairly took him by storm), upon her own; but she maintained a calm demeanor; and when Miss Ferrier whispered, "Who is it, Gwendoline? He seems to know us, and is coming this way," she answered quietly, "I do know him slightly. It is Mr. Piers Mostyn."

"What! that brother of Lord Luttrell's that one has heard such shocking things about?"

"Hush! Yes."

Next moment he was at their side; she introduced him with grave politeness to her sister-in-law, and he took his chair between them. Gwendoline's heart beat so fast and so loud that she almost wondered people did not turn round and ask what clock was ticking; but she looked straight before her without moving a muscle, and listened to him with great sedateness. As an old acquaintance, he, in the first place, naturally addressed her rather than her companion; but after a phrase or two of polite sympathy upon her recent bereavement, and an inquiry after Sir

Guy's health, he divided his attentions pretty equally between the two ladies. His endeavors were, however, mainly directed to conciliating "Judy," and in this he succeeded to admiration.

It is a peculiarity of elderly and pious ladies of all ranks, that while sufficiently severe upon the frailties of the youth of their own sex, they are very merciful to the "follies" of young men. They persist in looking upon them severally as victims to the wiles of "designing hussies," while they pity them individually in direct proportion to their good looks. Again, when these ancient females are of the middle rank, they are wont, notwithstanding their own high standard of morals, to grant considerable latitude to men of good birth and position. "We must remember," they say, "to how many temptations they are exposed" (a remark which they never dream of applying to the "poor hussies"); and though they do not quite confess as much even to themselves, they have a vague notion that young gentlemen of title have a sort of right divine to misbehave themselves in the matter of gallantry. Perhaps even this very reputation for "naughtiness" is not without a certain attraction for them, or perhaps it is with the pious wish of converting these exalted young evil-doers; but for whatever reason, certain it is that the class in question do "cotton" to young rouns of the aristocracy, whenever they get the chance, in a very remarkable manner; and Miss Judith Ferrier was no exception to the rule. It naturally flattered her self-love that this handsome and agreeable young fellow, own brother to a noble lord, should so evidently do his best to make himself pleasant to her, and especially that the beautiful Gwendoline did not (as was but too usual with the cavaliers of the table-d'hôte) exclusively monopolize his attention. His reputation for high play was indeed a much more serious matter in her eyes than his other failings; she "looked on gamblin' and all sic things as you lose money by" with the abhorrence peculiar to her nation; but, on the other hand, it was sad to think how, concerning the peccadilloes of great people, folks were given to lying; and she charitably hoped that the scandal about him in this matter was grossly exaggerated.

Piers had, of course, been to Scotland, as a guest in many of the mansions of the North, to which she had been accustomed to look up as to the dwelling of the gods upon Olympus; and he had also been to Glasgow, which (he said) he admired prodigiously. Before the table-d'hôte was over, in fact, you would have thought—to watch the faces of the two ladies—that it was the ancient spinster rather than the fair widow who was enamored of the Honorable Piers Mostyn; and it was positively upon her invitation, and not upon Gwendoline's, that he subsequently partook of coffee in their own apartment.

Absence may possibly make some hearts grow fonder, but we are much inclined to question that being its general effect, and, at all events, such was not the case with Piers. He had not forgotten Gwendoline, of course; but when separated from her, he had solaced himself with the charms of others, and could have undoubtedly lived without her very comfortably—if he had possessed the means—to his life's end. He had an idea, too, that all this trouble and bother

about "old Ferrier's" death would have had its effect upon her appearance; that widow's weeds would not have become her; and that altogether she would have "fallen off" in her looks. But now that he had found her more beautiful than ever, he was once more at her feet, not, indeed, in the sense of being fascinated or a captive, but as a willing and even eager lover. He was agreeably surprised and greatly pleased with Gwendoline, just as one is wont to value a possession about which one has been suspicious, but which turns out to be quite a bargain. The alternation of passion and cynicism in her moods was to his liking (for he had long lost all taste for simplicity in women), and instead of having (as he had apprehended) to feign his raptures, he almost fell in love with her for the second time.

On the first occasion when they met alone, their greeting was, in fact, equally warm on both sides. "What a happy moment is this!" cried he, embracing her; "there is nothing for us to fear now; all obstacles are surmounted, and that so soon and easily."

The assent was long in coming, but it came at last. "Yes, dearest."

Judy, who had grown audacious with respect to Swiss *entrées*, and in the praiseworthy attempt to get her money's worth out of the table-d'hôte on the previous day, had eaten more freely than was good for her, was fortunately confined to her own room; so the two lovers were left to themselves. They had not been alone together since the night of their parting at Bedivere Court, and the incidents of that occasion naturally occurred to them. He reminded her, smiling, of how she had then said that there was one thing the test of which not even her love could have stood, namely, poverty, and inquired was she of the same opinion still.

"Yes, Piers," said she, firmly. "Are not you?"

"Well, yes," said he. "Of course, I did not like your marrying old Ferrier, though I felt you were right all along. But that's all over now, my dear, and we shall be extremely jolly. We have got a great prize, and, upon the whole, we have not paid a great price for it."

She was silent, and scarce dared to offer him her cheek to kiss, in lieu of answer, lest he should notice how deadly cold it was. Notwithstanding that his arm was wound lovingly about her, her blood seemed to stagnate. "Not a great price. Good God!" She used this ejaculation quite mechanically; yet it sent a chill through her anew. Suppose there was a good God after all? "Not a great price. If this man only knew what the price had been!"

"I like your friend Mr. Mostyn," said Miss Ferrier, frankly, as she and Gwendoline sat together over their breakfast a few days afterward.

"My friend!—nay, I should rather say *your* friend," replied her sister-in-law, archly. "I am sure he pays much more attention to you than he does to me. You will get quite talked about, you two!"

The idea of being "talked about" in connection with the Honorable Piers Mostyn was rather agreeable to Miss Judith; and not by any means merely ludicrous, as it appeared to Gwendoline. She patted the young widow's hand reprovingly, and said, "Oh fy!"

But Gwendoline had a reason of her own for keeping the conversation to this channel. The period had now arrived when Miss Ferrier's moral support was become more than ever necessary to her, and she was determined to obtain it on the first opportunity. When she and Piers were once married, she could dispense with the old lady's assistance easily enough, and fully intended to do so; but to gain her consent to that union was of the utmost importance. Who could ever say a word against it, if her late husband's sister, and only relative, was in its favor? and she did not despair of gaining her good word. "Mr. Mostyn has been 'talked about' enough already," continued Gwendoline, musingly; "I wonder whether he is as black as he is painted?"

"That I am quite sure he is not," said Miss Ferrier, positively. "There can not be any very great harm in a young man who goes out of his way so (as he *does*) to make himself agreeable to a person of my years—almost old enough to be his mother."

It passed through Gwendoline's mind that, so far as years went, Judith Ferrier might have been Piers Mostyn's grandmother, without any great violation of the laws of nature; but she did not give expression to that idea. "He is certainly very polite," said she, assentingly; "but I have been told by papa, who knows the world very thoroughly, that it is always those men who are most courteous and respectful to our sex in manner and demeanor that are the most heartless in their near relations with them."

"I can never believe that Mr. Mostyn is heartless," observed Judith, softly. There was an unaccustomed pathos in Miss Ferrier's tone that did not escape her observant companion; and Gwendoline remained silent, to let the other's feelings have full play.

"He reminds me—though, again, in some things he is so different," sighed her sister-in-law, "of one that—" She paused, put her handkerchief to her eyes, and shook her head.

"Of one that is gone?" suggested Gwendoline, sympathizingly.

"Yes, gone from me, though he is not dead, my dear. It is getting to be near half a century ago, and yet I remember it as if it was yesterday. He was a most respectable young man, and had a very thriving commercial establishment. He did a great deal of business with foreign parts; that was one of the reasons why I was so set against visiting them."

Miss Judith's sensibility had invested the bare circumstance that her early suitor had kept an Italian warehouse with this amazing halo; but her present tenderness of reminiscence was perfectly genuine. Half a century ago or so, when she had been by no means an unattractive-looking lassie, she had been wooed by a Glasgow youth, named David Penrose, of whose personal appearance—the photograph of which had never faded from her virgin mind—Piers Mostyn reminded her. They were not probably much alike in other respects; and we may safely say (if there is any confidence to be placed in averages) that David was worth ten of him. But yet he had played poor Judy false; had "thrown her over" (if we may use such a phrase with delicacy) in favor of one Jennie Kerr, who was better dowered than the then portionless Judith. But she had forgiven him that by this time,

though she had not forgiven Jennie; and all her memories of that far back spring-tide were kindly and tender. Had that little matter come off more satisfactorily, Judith would have been doubtless a different woman. Our temperaments, as well as our religious convictions, are in a great measure the result of circumstances; and she was not by nature sour, nor had she been born a Calvinist. Her hard features seemed to soften as she spoke of those early days; her harsh voice grew almost musical, her eyes filled with tender tears—the genuine dew of the morning of life.

Gwendoline's heart was not one that could be touched by such a spectacle; but she thoroughly understood the situation, and hastened at once to profit by it. "Dear Miss Ferrier," said she, "your words affect me more than I can express. I feel for you—believe me—deeply; as, indeed, I have reason to feel; for when I married your poor brother, I—he—he was not the man of my own choice."

Miss Ferrier laid down the work on which her trembling fingers had affected to be engaged, with a look of unaffected surprise, for in all Mrs. Barland's aspersions against Gwendoline's character, she had never hinted at this. "Why, you don't say so, my dear; and yet you made Bruce such an excellent wife!"

"I did my best in that respect," said Gwendoline, simply; "but I loved another when I married him. It was not my fault; I obeyed my father. He whom I would have married was as poor as myself, and our engagement papa said was out of the question."

"That was just what happened with Davy," sighed Miss Ferrier. "It was the money did it. He thought Jennie Kerr a better match—though he was wrong even there, as it turned out. But go on, my dear, and tell me about yourself. Is the young man still alive that would have married you?"

"Yes."

"And unmarried?"

"Yes. It was Piers himself."

"What! the Honorable Piers Mostyn!" exclaimed the astonished Judith—"the only brother of Lord Luttrell?"

It had instantly occurred to her (as Gwendoline had hoped it would) that, although she could not marry Piers herself, it would be a great feather in her social cap to be sister-in-law to the woman who did. "Why, if that brother of his should die, she, Judith Ferrier, could be almost said to be connected with the peerage itself!" It was anomalous enough that this pious old lady, who so often expressed her satisfaction that she had only a few more years to live among the pomps and vanities of a wicked world, should have derived satisfaction from this consideration; yet it is not only a fact that she did so, but also that she had never been so thoroughly pleased with her future prospects since the day when false young David promised to make her Mrs. Penrose. "Lor, my dear, and what do you mean to do now?" inquired she, with extreme interest.

"Well, that is a matter which, in due course of time—certainly not to-day or to-morrow," returned Gwendoline, gravely, "concerning which I had thought of asking your valuable advice. Since you yourself have touched upon the subject—though I feel there is a delicacy in speaking of it so comparatively soon after your dear brother's

death—I will say this much, that if at some future period I could be induced to consider Mr. Mostyn's suit with favor, it would be mainly from the reflection that the dear children would have some one else to look to than their step-mother, in yourself. Otherwise, nothing could induce me to think of a second marriage. Though, as to that, I am sure Piers would be a most kind father; for, whatever his shortcomings, he is certainly tender-hearted."

"He is that, I am sure," assented Judith, rapturously.

"Well, what I had vaguely thought about, dear Miss Ferrier—for all these things are in the future, and, but for this unexpected meeting with Mr. Mostyn, might never have taken any tangible shape—was this: that in case I was ever induced to marry Piers, that I might intrust dear Marian, with, of course, a suitable provision for her maintenance, to your care. The bracing Scotch air is in a manner native to her, and Dr. Gisborne himself once mentioned it as likely to do her good."

"That would be a capital plan," said Miss Ferrier, eagerly. The old lady was genuinely attached to little Marian, who, she averred, was "quite a companion to any body" by this time. The idea of a liberal allowance per annum for her keep (although, to do her justice, quite a secondary consideration) was also not unpleasing.

"Then supposing, just for the sake of argument," continued Gwendoline, "that if, some time hence, the event of which we have been speaking should be hinted at by Mr. Mostyn, I may consider the question without reference to dear Marian?"

"I should like to have the darling child to live with me above all things," said Miss Ferrier, gratefully; and for that time the subject dropped.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MARRIAGE GIFT.

It is a moot-point, and must ever be so among good people like ourselves, how far wicked folks are able to enjoy themselves; it seems, however, that they do continue to do so in some degree. The professional thief (for instance) has his hours of relaxation, and doubtless of pleasure, when, in company of the (temporary) object of his affection, or over the jovial bowl, he is oblivious to the existence of the police. Conscience has not power at all times, although, perhaps, its sting may return with the more virulence after such brief intervals of impunity. Thus, the moral support of Miss Ferrier having been secured, Gwendoline gave herself up, if not to happiness, at all events to the hopes of it, and resolutely stifled all misgivings. She lived in the smiles of her lover whenever it was possible; and when alone—and she was never alone in the daytime, for the company of her sister-in-law, or even her step-children, was far preferable to her own—she took her laudanum in increased doses. Piers continued assiduously attentive to "Judy," and devoted to herself; and if he had now and then very particular business which took him to Homburg or Baden, he always returned more submis-

sive than ever, and grievously in want of money, with which Gwendoline supplied him without stint.

The whole party remained at Lucerne far into the winter; and when exactly one year had elapsed since Mr. Ferrier's death, returned to Paris, where Piers and Gwendoline were married at the British Embassy, Miss Ferrier and the children departing the same day for Glen Druid. Fortune, which would thus seem to have filled Gwendoline's cup to the brim, had still another gift in store for her, which, curiously enough, was presented on her wedding-day. The bride and bridegroom were at dinner when an express messenger arrived from London seeking speech with Mr. Mostyn. He left the table, and was for some time absent. Gwendoline grew fidgety and disturbed; was it possible that even now, in that first hour of success, Nemesis was coming upon her? Her secret was safe enough, save in her own nervous imagination; but in that it was never safe. What event, thought she, in England could possibly have happened of such importance as to necessitate a special messenger? Conscience does not reason, or she would have reflected that, if it had had any thing to do with her own affairs, the man would not have been sent to Piers. At last her husband returned, wearing some gravity in his face, but more of triumph. "Gwendoline,"

said he, taking her hand, "my brother has been killed by a fall from his horse. I salute you," and he kissed her cheek, "as Lady Luttrell."

If there was not much fraternal sentiment in his words, there was as much as could be reasonably expected. There had never been "any love lost," as the phrase goes, between himself and his brother, and he was not the man to trouble himself to affect a virtue without some solid reasons; but in the ordinary and conventional sense of the term, Piers Mostyn was a gentleman, and good manners, if nothing more, prevented him from evincing any vulgar satisfaction. It was not so, however, with Gwendoline. Relieved from her vague fears, wild with excitement, and for once thrown off her guard, she exclaimed, "How lucky it was we did not hear of this good news yesterday, or our marriage must needs have been put off!"

The unseemliness of the remark, rather than its calculating selfishness, jarred upon the not over-sensitive ear of the new-made lord. "Yes, that was fortunate," replied he, coolly; "and there is another pleasant consideration, I come into my kingdom, such as it is; so no one can now say that the luck is *all* upon my side."

It is not a good augury for the future when folks upon their wedding-day begin to balance their respective advantages and obligations.

THE REAPING.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FIRST CROP.

FIVE years have passed away, bringing their changes to the characters of this history as they are more or less capable of change. Lord Luttrell is not much altered, and Gwendoline still less so, except as far as her personal beauty is concerned, which has not diminished, but has entered on another phase—for she is a mother. Her only child, the Honorable Spencer Mostyn, is now four years old—a splendid little fellow, who has inherited the good looks of both his parents, and, let us hope, not their vices. His father's interest in him—since there is no entail for him to cut off in his favor—is very faint. Epsom and Newmarket, with whist so short and sharp that one may lose hundreds of pounds in an hour at it, absorb my lord's intellectual energies; while his social occupation is the pursuit (by no means under difficulties) of the fair sex. But dark-eyed Spencer is the darling of his mother, who is devoted to him; of Dr. Gisborne, now an old and broken man, with no fire left save a mild glow of tenderness; and of all who know his fair frank face and winning ways. Miss Ferrier dotes upon him, and Marian and Eady are never so happy as when it is their task to amuse him; but they are not much thrown together. The two girls are a good deal with their aunt in Scotland, and visit their own home only at intervals.

Sir Guy is dead, and Bedivere Court is in the hands of Mr. Aaron Melchisadeck, the money-lender, of whom the county hears with horror that, since he can not sell it at the sum the keen old baronet persuaded him to advance, he is go-

ing to live there himself. Lord Luttrell alone expresses it as his opinion that it would be a deuced convenient thing if he did.

Gwendoline administers the property of her step-children with tolerable fairness. Glen Druid is kept up as it should be, or, at all events, it has the air of being so when they and their aunt visit it; but of course there is a large surplus out of the funds left for their maintenance and education, and all this finds its way into my lord's pocket, the seams of which have unhappily become unsewn; it has no bottom to it whatever. Up to this time, Gwendoline has assisted him to the utmost of her means, but she is not wholly wrapped up in her husband now; her child's interests have also to be considered. Of those two she is still fond—though with an ever widening difference in Spencer's favor—and also, to all appearance, of her step-children; but to the rest of the world she is hard and cold. She wears her mask no longer so closely or so continuously as heretofore, for it is not now worth her while; and Miss Ferrier has in consequence quite lost her illusions with respect to her sister-in-law; but the boy is a common tie between them still.

Supposing, indeed, it is the fact that all the world are born bad, little Spencer is the exception that is necessary to prove the rule; or, if that suggestion is unorthodox, let us suppose his two parents were the two negatives that have made him an affirmative of goodness. He would be an angel but for the possession of what his father calls "a devil of a temper," but which is, in fact, nothing more than a determination to stand by his rights, and (what is much rarer) by the rights of other people. He possesses a sense of justice

so impartial as to be quite alarming and revolutionary. The idea which his mother secretly entertains, that Marian and Eady have got his property, and ought to be ashamed of growing up co-heiresses, has never entered his mind, nor does she ever venture to hint it to him. He has not inherited her dislike to honest Susan. He will have no one unjustly-treated or misused, if he knows it, down to his sober bay pony. The only cloud upon his bright young life is that he can not quite bring himself to love papa.

We have said that Gwendoline no longer troubled herself to deceive even Miss Ferrier; but in one respect she did endeavor to do so. Womanly pride impelled her to still strive to conceal from her that she was not quite so happy in her second marriage as she had expected to be. In this she failed; but, on the other hand, her sister-in-law did not fathom the fact that she was supremely wretched. The knowledge of her husband's unfaithfulness had come to her long ago—very soon, indeed, after their marriage; but time, while it widened that knowledge, did not heal her wounded spirit. Jealousy consumed her now, as love had done aforetime. Such delinquencies a wife may forgive, even again and again; but the forgiveness must be sought, and Lord Luttrell never dreamed of seeking it. On the first occasion of suspicion, there had been a very unedifying scene between them. Piers was too "refined" to laugh in a lady's face, but he had expressed himself with brutal candor. He designated her scruples as "utter nonsense," and only adapted for the daughter of some small tradesman: her alliance with the Ferrier "lot" had forsooth made her quite "respectable." Such arguments he would have her to know were quite out of place addressed by a woman of position to her husband. When she endeavored to combat this view, he grew more audacious still, and passed from the general to the particular. Even if, as she represented, good society had any distinct code of morals, *he*, at all events, could not be expected to be bound by it. To suit her plans, he had remained a bachelor; but, now that he was married, he would no longer be her slave. He considered that old compact between them to be a quittance of all obligations between them beyond their mutual convenience. To be plain, they were both adventurers, who, with a common stake, had played a great game, and won it; but as to sentiment, there was nothing of that sort at all in the transaction. He would flirt just as much as he pleased.

With that curt expression of his intentions, Lord Luttrell had turned upon his heel and left her, and he had kept his word respecting them. At first, Gwendoline strove to appear contemptuously indifferent to her husband's profligacy; but the only effect of that was to afford him great relief. Then she endeavored to make him jealous by her own course of conduct, in which she totally failed, for two reasons. *Inprimis*, though not without passion, her affections, like those of most of her sex, were personal. She did not care for men, but only for one man; and it was difficult for her, actress though she was, even to feign otherwise. Secondly, when she had done so, and looked for an outbreak from her husband, it came only in a peal of laughter. "My dear Lady Luttrell," said he (for he was as polite to her in private as in public), "you amuse me immensely; *when* you think to make me jealous, however,

you are imputing to me an injustice. Above all things, I wish to be fair; and when I demanded for myself the most perfect freedom, I did not intend tyrannically to deny it to my wife."

This insolent indifference wounded her more than all her wrongs. It was a cynicism that she was totally unprepared for, and against which there was no contending. Above all, she was forever haunted with the sense of the tremendous *unknown* price which she had paid to gain this man, who had so soon grown weary of her. She could not help expecting him, although it was unknown, to take it into account. Neither repentance nor remorse, but a dull resentful rage, took possession of her when she reflected upon this. Had she endowed him with money, obtained by such means as *that*, for him to make her wretched? For she was at once the minister and the victim to his profligacy. She had heard of a place of future punishment reserved for those who did such deeds as she had done, but she believed in it now less than ever, for was she not receiving her punishment already at the hands of this ungrateful, iron-hearted man? Then she would remind herself of her folly in crediting him with the knowledge of the sacrifice she had made of mental peace, and even of the material rest such as the meanest creature enjoyed, for his dear sake, and then once more would upbraid him again. It was only by degrees that she had been driven to these bitter communings with her own heart. She had not spared to express her reproaches; she had even condescended to appeal to his pity. Scenes of violence, of scorn, of reckless recrimination, and also of passionate entreaty, had taken place between them before it had come to this pass, and all this, it must be remembered, while the pair were outwardly upon good terms with one another, in the smooth, respectable round of county life, or among the clamorous vanities of the town. She bore the wretchedness of her lot bravely enough before the world, just as in the river-bed some riven-breasted rock stands with its noble head above the sparkling foam. If she could not win *his* pity, she would have no others'. She was still an object of admiration to all who saw her, and of envy to not a few who thought they knew her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECOND GENERATION.

THE years roll on; and save for one bright spot—her boy, who is now at Eton—Gwendoline's firmament is darker than ever. The domestic life of the Luttrells has begun to be commented upon: it is notorious that his lordship is the slave of a certain female leader of fashion, and her ladyship must therefore needs receive her share of the world's intolerable pity. They are at their town house; and though Gwendoline's "at homes" are numerous, the word home is a sad misnomer. Her husband and herself are but rarely seen together in public, and never meet alone save on momentous occasions. One of these has just arisen. It is more serious than the usual applications for money which now alone cause Lord Luttrell to seek the presence of his wife: it is a letter from poor terrified Miss Ferrier, telling of Marian's serious illness, followed

by a telegram announcing her death. A touching circumstance attends it. On the morning *after* the receipt of the last message comes a note from the now dead girl—such miracles can science now perform—begging Gwendoline not to be alarmed; expressing her (the writer's) belief that she is not really so ill as her aunt believes her to be, and begging that her dear step-mother may not be induced to leave London, where she is doubtless enjoying herself so much, upon her account. Thoughtful for others to the last, the poor girl seemed to speak kindness from the very tomb. Gwendoline had no tears to shed, but she was not a little moved by this. Perhaps her long pretended affection for this short-lived, fragile creature had turned to genuine regard; or perhaps the thought that one out of the only two persons of her own sex who really loved her, and upon whose good offices she could count, was gone forever, produced some selfish sense of desolation; or perhaps (for all that affected her boy affected her) she knew that Spencer would weep to hear such news. But, at all events, she regretted Marian's death. To Lord Luttrell the affair presented another aspect. The leader of fashion had snubbed him for a day or two, and he was not so polite as usual to his wife in consequence.

"Well," said he, petulantly, "I hope the other one's life is a better one, or I shall have made a bad bargain after all."

The remark, under the circumstances, was sufficiently brutal in itself; but the misfortune of the possession of good manners in those who are mere scoundrels at bottom is that, when the polish *does* rub off, the true substance appears all the more objectionable. A King Charles's spaniel with the mange is one of the most unpleasing spectacles. It struck Gwendoline for the first time that she had married a ruffian. For the first time also she found herself thinking moodily of the old man who had loved her so dearly, and had made provision for her against this very contingency which had just happened, so that her circumstances were none the worse for it. From his lips there had never fallen one severe word, far less a selfish or a cruel one; and yet she did not deceive herself even now: she well remembered that she had always hated him, and had shuddered with a deadlier chill on the day she married than even on that terrible morning when she saw him lying white and dead. But this reflection did not soften her toward Piers. Henceforth she resolutely determined to try another plan with him; and the next time she saw him in private—upon a matter of finance—she put it into execution. It was one of those periods at which she received the sum for the maintenance of her step-children—now reduced to one—and he had come, according to custom, to draw his lion's share of the spoil.

"No, Luttrell," answered she to his application (he was no longer "Piers" with her now), "this money is not mine to give. It was not intended to be spent upon me; certainly not upon you, and least of all upon those on whom you would squander it. You shall no longer have one penny of it—unless you mend your ways."

It was curious that, though her sense of his abuse of the gift in question had been so keen, she had never before thought of this obvious method of reprisal, which had been always in her

power, since the allowance could only be obtained by her own signature. Perhaps her pride had refused to hint at how the money was spent; perhaps it had not stooped to so commonplace a revenge; but, at all events, so it was.

"Oh," replied he, with a cold sneer, "that is your plan, is it? You have failed to carry the citadel by assault, so now you mean to starve out the garrison."

"I mean to try," said Gwendoline, grimly.

"Very good, madam;" and it seemed strange to her how that handsome face of his could wear such an ugly look: "we shall see. Hitherto, if I have pleased myself, I have done so with some discretion, and with a due regard to your position as my wife."

"You have been most considerate, I am sure," said she; and her look of cold contempt was more scornful even than her words.

"You fool," cried he, in a fury, "you don't know whom you are defying. I have some popularity, madam, and a good deal would be forgiven me in way of what you call 'outrage'; but I shall test the charity of our friends to the utmost. I will do such things as shall make you blush through your rouge. Because you are not liked, you fancy, forsooth, that you are respected! Well, I will so insult you before society—before the world—that respect for you shall be no longer possible, but must needs give place to contemptuous pity."

He saw her shudder, in spite of all her efforts to remain unmoved.

"Yes," sneered he; "you have, unfortunately for yourself, a certain foolish pride, which makes you quite unfit to contend with one like me, who have no such weakness. Since you are thus weighted, the struggle, believe me, is unequal. Be warned in time; you will not only be beaten, but you will suffer in the contest itself. Your challenge is as idle (if you will forgive me the ungallantry of the metaphor) as though one of our old crazy wooden ships should pit herself against an iron-clad."

"You are indeed as the thing to which you liken yourself, sir; and not only impervious as to your thick skin—your very heart is iron."

"Possibly, madam; maybe, since it is the iron which makes such ships so dear; that is why I am so expensive. I own I spend a good deal of money; a man in my position can scarcely do otherwise in this country."

"Then you had better try living abroad; you have been used to do that—cheaply."

"Perhaps I may, madam; but, in that case, you may be sure of one thing—I shall take Spencer with me."

Gwendoline broke down under that dreadful threat. She could not afford to part with her boy, and far less intrust him to such a tutor. But something else broke down at the same time—the last link that had yet bound her to her husband. He conquered; but his victory cost him the relics of her love. They were henceforth dissevered and apart. Let him beware lest they should become not only alien, but antagonistic. Let him look to it, lest, having lost her love, a worse thing should befall him: he might earn her hate. There is none but herself who knows how dangerous that hate can be.

In the mean time she surrendered at discretion as to the money; and leaving her husband to

enjoy himself after his own fashion in town, she withdrew herself to Glen Druid, to which Miss Ferrier and Edith were about to pay their visit, and whither Spencer was coming from Eton. To the content of both, husband and wife did not meet again for a considerable time.

Glen Druid is comparatively unchanged since the day when first we were invited thither. There are no trees, to be called such, in these parts, to grow and broaden, and the rock-bound coast is well-nigh as changeless as the eternal sea. If improvement had been needed in the house itself—which it could scarcely be, so beautiful had been poor Giulia's home—Gwendoline had had no money to spare for such a purpose; and the place was just as it was. Spencer, who was very fond of it—delighting, boy-like, in the pleasures of the country, and hating the town—would sometimes interrogate his mother about Glen Druid in Mr. Ferrier's time, and unwittingly reopen many a wound. Especially he would ask questions about Eady's father. For although the place was much the same, the tenants had altered. Eady had grown up to be an exquisitely beautiful young woman, and Spencer himself was so well grown and forward that you might have almost thought him to be a man. He had sincerely mourned for Marian; but of Eady, who was more of an age with him, he was passionately fond.

As a general rule, boys, until they reach the age of hobbledehoyism, are quite indifferent to girls. They despise them, and are uncomfortable in their society; but it was not so with the young Etonian. With such parents, it was only to be expected that he should have no *mauvaise honte*, and his natural disposition was as tender and affectionate as it was spirited. Eady was fond of the bright lad, as those of her sex and age are wont to be sometimes of their young brothers; but with Spencer a different sort of fondness was growing up within him than that which is the portion of a sister. As they strolled together with her arm round his neck, or her hand placed lovingly upon his sunny hair, she did not know what grave delight she gave him, or how he treasured up every word, and smile, and touch. That walk around the Warrior's Helm, which has already been the scene of at least one honest courtship and of one misplaced passion, was now trodden by a pair quite different from either of those couples with whom we have been acquainted. In this case, the passion—the courtship—if the fond dream of youth can be so termed, was all upon one side; the love was common to both. They would have laid down their lives for one another—these two—but from not quite the same motive. Their affection on both sides was disinterested, but (as usual) less unselfish on the side of the male. It never entered into Edith's heart that this Eton boy of sixteen, who had come home for the holidays with such joy again and again, because he passed them all in her sweet company, could be "thinking seriously" of a young woman of near twenty years of age. The same reason prevented others from seeing any thing in Spencer's behavior toward Edith which their long and affectionate intercourse did not account for. It was witnessed only by those who had seen them children together, and when the one had always played the part of elder sister, amusement-provider, and protectress to the

other. Even Gwendoline was blind to the true state of affairs, though from a very different cause. It seemed to her, *knowing what she did*, not only that a union between her son and Edith Ferrier was unnatural and impossible, but that the very idea must also be so. As in times past with Lord Luttrell, she had credited her son with a knowledge that he did not possess, and notwithstanding that she shuddered at the bare notion of his possessing it, because it monopolized her whole being, because she thought of it whenever she was compelled to think—that is, in every unoccupied and solitary moment by day, and dreamed of it in her drugged sleep by night.

There was only one person in whom even a suspicion of the course which Spencer's affections were taking had arisen. Susan Barland—whose Samuel had been long snatched away from his healing arts by vengeful Death, and who was herself a more than middle-aged woman—perceived, or thought she perceived, that Miss Eady's old playmate was growing fast into her lover, and the idea filled her with repugnance and vague horror. Even she had been won over by the lad's honest ways, and just and kindly behavior toward herself, as well (when there could not have been danger in it) by his devotion to her beloved Eady; but she had never forgotten that he was Gwendoline's son; and, now that this fatal attachment was springing up, that recollection went nigh to freeze her blood. In her own heart of hearts she had always been convinced that there had been foul play with respect to her old master's death, and she was not one to give up an opinion because it was not shared by others, or loose her hold of it through lapse of time. Moreover, though she never directly breathed a word of so grave a charge, she had now one to whom she could speak of Gwendoline's shortcomings and backslidings, and be sure of sympathy. Miss Ferrier, though full of years and infirmities, and very deaf, had still willing ears for talk of that sort. No pains were now taken by Gwendoline to keep her in good humor. She liked nothing better—so limited had the poor old lady's range of pleasures become—than, closeted with Susan in her own apartment at Glen Druid, to hear her relieve her mind, over a dish of tea, with scandal against Lady Luttrell. Again and again did the persistent widow go back upon the old story of her dead mistress, and descant upon how queer it was that Dr. Gisborne had been so submissive to Miss Treharne in concealing Giulia's danger; how strange it was, too, about the medicine and that; and again how shamefaced it was in Mrs. Ferrier to write to Mr. Mostyn, as was, before her own poor husband was cold. Through this edifying gossip, added to the want of "attention" paid to her in the house, where formerly she had been made so much of, all Miss Ferrier's ancient dislike to Gwendoline was revived, as well as a sort of terror of her created, which she was unable in her feeble state to conceal. Her sister-in-law easily perceived it, and also the source from which it came, but only with bitter scorn. She smiled at her own folly in ever having entertained an apprehension of such contemptible antagonists as this doting spinster and her tattling hanger-on. Her wretchedness was far too sublime to be affected by such a trumpety annoyance. Nor, indeed, so far as one of the two offenders were

concerned, did it last long; for Miss Ferrier, who had been long ailing, at last succumbed to one or the other of her numerous ailments, and died.

The event was of little consequence to Gwendoline, and certainly caused her not half the annoyance with which, about the same time, she learned that her husband was coming to Glen Druid. They had been absent from one another—save for a few brief meetings—for so very long, that the report had got abroad that they were separated. This rumor, or even the fact itself, would have affected neither of them, but the leader of fashion, to whom my lord was still “devoted” after his manner, had, it seemed, been outraged by the scandal that it was on her account that the Luttrells had quarreled; she would not, she said, permit such an infamous falsehood to bear even that color of truth which his lordship’s absence from his home might impart to it, and she imperiously ordered him down to Glen Druid. In the best society, there is no such thing as a hen-pecked husband; but, though it is not the wives who are the tyrants, there is, nevertheless, a good deal of female tyranny. Lord Luttrell obeyed at once, though, indeed, there was another reason for seeking his wife’s presence. He had lost frightful sums in gambling, and was threatened with ruin and dishonor. Without knowing either of the reasons which produced his visit—and certain only that they had nothing to do with regard for herself—Gwendoline awaited his arrival with gloom and bitterness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EADY’S PRUDENCE.

EDITH FERRIER, who had not an enemy in the world, would have been glad to have loved and respected all about her; but this she could never accomplish with respect to Lord Luttrell. She was devoted to Gwendoline, and she could not but perceive, comparatively few as her opportunities of observation had been, that her step-mother was an ill-used wife. She loved Spencer dearly, and seeing that his father was wholly indifferent to him, she did not make the struggle to extenuate such unnatural conduct, as the good lad thought it *his* duty to do. She understood vaguely that Lord Luttrell was dissipated and extravagant, and even that he was in great want of money: Gwendoline had informed her of the latter fact herself, partly to excuse her husband’s dejection, which (so very thin was his lordship’s lacker) had, in his present state of boredom at Glen Druid, rather the form of moroseness toward every body, and partly, perhaps, to elicit her intentions with respect to her property when she should come of age. Eady was generous to a fault, and when this revelation was made to her, she offered (for her step-mother’s sake) to relieve Lord Luttrell from his embarrassments as soon as she should come of age. “They tell me I am a great heiress,” said she, “and I am sure I shall not know what to do with my money.”

“At all events, my dear, you need not throw it in the gutter,” was Gwendoline’s grim reply. “In the first place, my husband’s liabilities are

enormous, and beyond any thing you have imagined; and, secondly, to give Lord Luttrell money—even if I could consent to such a sacrifice on my account—would be only to pour water into a sieve. If he had the whole of your great income to spend upon himself, he would be in debt by the end of the year. Of course we suffer because he is so poor; but that can’t be helped, since he will always be so.”

“It must be very sad, however, to be poor,” said Eady. “I shall take care that Spencer never suffers in that way. You can at least have no objection to my making provision for *him*, since that would not be done for your sake, but for his own.”

Gwendoline kissed the generous girl, and smiled encouragingly. She was desirous to hear in detail—for she had become exceedingly practical of late years, and especially with respect to money matters—what form this generous resolution was to take. Eady knew that there was a difficulty just then even in sending Spencer to Cambridge on account of want of funds, and her private intention was, as soon as she came of age, to make over to him half her fortune; but she was too delicate in feeling to pursue the subject. Still Gwendoline had learned something which was useful to her in a certain discussion which took place shortly afterward between her husband and herself respecting her step-daughter and ward. He had been arranging matters with her, not very agreeably—though, as usual, when he was in straits, he was polite and comparatively conciliatory in manner—for the satisfying his more pressing creditors, and the staving off of others; and after all was settled, he began to speak of Edith. He was wholly indifferent to her existence, as he had been to that of Marian; but he was grown to be keen and calculating—as his wife had grown hard and grasping—in all matters that concerned himself: he was not one to lose an opportunity however slight, an advantage however indirect, and therefore Eady was not left out of his reckoning with respect to the future. The idea of her marrying his son had entered into *his* mind. If the disparity of years, which, indeed, would have struck no one who was not aware of it—so tall and manly was Spencer, and so slight and child-like (just as her mother had been)—was Edith—had been twice as great as it really was, it would have appeared no obstacle to Lord Luttrell, had his own advantage seemed to lie in such alliance; but it did not. He had a shrewd suspicion that he should not get much money out of Spencer, were he even to wed this heiress; for, in the first place, the boy was much more under the influence of Gwendoline than of himself; and, secondly, he still had that “devil of a temper,” a will of his own that would be neither cajoled nor over-ridden. He was not one to be made a tool of; and he had a Quixotic sense of justice, that would probably make him refuse to expend any great proportion of his wife’s property in paying his father’s turf and card debts. And yet Lord Luttrell’s views for Edith’s future were matrimonial, as we shall see. “That girl is getting to be very delicate,” said he; “and if you don’t take great care, Lady Luttrell, she will be going the way of her sister.”

“In which case, I dare say, you would grieve as deeply as you did for Marian,” was Gwendoline’s cynical rejoinder, for his conduct on that occasion

recurred to her vividly, and she was already in bitter mood with him.

"I should grieve a deuced deal more deeply, madam," was his cool reply, "since, if she dies before she comes of age, all she has will pass to some Scotch cousin, I suppose."

"I suppose it will."

"Well, if that is of no consequence to you, it is to me, madam, and I wish to prevent it."

"Prevent her dying?" sneered Gwendoline.

"You are very clever, Luttrell: the longer I know you, the cleverer you seem; but are you clever enough to prevent that?"

"At all events, we may prevent the only thing which will make her loss of any consequence," observed he, quietly; for he could still put some control upon his temper when it was his interest to do so, and he wanted Gwendoline's help in what he was about to propose. "My idea is, Lady Luttrell, to get the girl married as quickly as we can, and while she is yet in tolerable health. She is now twenty, and must be brought out—the money for that can be found somewhere, surely; I should not wonder if you had a secret store yourself still left for such an exigency?" And he looked up at her sharply and greedily.

"I with a store!" said she, contemptuously; "I, who have a spendthrift for a husband! If your plan rests upon that basis, I tell you at once it is a rotten one."

"It does not rest on that. What I mean to say is this, that as soon as Edith is brought out she will be surrounded by greedy fortune-hunters."

"And also by the best *partis* in the kingdom," was Gwendoline's quiet reply; "for she is as beautiful and captivating as she is rich."

"I don't wish to deny her attractions, madam; but we must take care to select her husband from those with whom her money is the principal object. We must marry her to some one whose relatives will make it worth our while. The negotiation will be delicate, no doubt; but if I can trust Lady Luttrell with the social difficulty, the getting the girl to choose the right man, I think I can answer for the success of the business transaction. Our remuneration," added Lord Luttrell, reflectively, "ought to be something in five figures at the very least."

Though Gwendoline only answered by a grim smile, her husband felt satisfied that she not only thoroughly understood his suggestion, but would proceed to act upon it, and with a careless nod of his head he lounged out of the room.

It was quite true that the coming out of Edith Ferrier had been delayed to an extreme limit, and the fact had already excited remark. Society—the tender creature—felt a great interest in this young girl, much the same sort of interest that the betting-ring feels in the debut on the turf of some young gentleman who has a great deal of money to spend. But for such feeders, what would become of the racing profession? And how could Society be kept up in its due state and glitter, if all young heiresses were to be kept at home, wasting their affections on their own belongings, or giving their goods to feed the poor? Society resented it deeply in Edith Ferrier's case, where something like twenty thousand a year was involved, and openly murmured at her being kept so long in the background by her step-mother; yet in this case Gwendoline was worse spoken of than she deserved. It was true

that she had had no wish to introduce Eady in fashionable life; and, indeed, she had scarce money to do it in a fitting manner; but, on the other hand—not to mention that Edith infinitely preferred quiet at Glen Druid to riot in Mayfair—the state of the girl's health was a valid and genuine excuse for her seclusion.

Dr. Gisborne is not consulted about her, because he has grown unequal to any such work; but famous physicians have come down from town to see Miss Ferrier, and pronounce upon her case by no means favorably. The action of the heart is feeble, and they fear she has hereditary heart disease; her father died of that complaint, as Lady Luttrell tells them, and of course they do not doubt its being an admitted fact. Nothing is spared that could give her comfort or pleasure; and her step-mother is, as usual, devoted in her personal attentions. Edith repays her, for the present, with the most grateful and loving trust, and hopes to be able to prove her gratitude in a more material manner. There is not a single subject of disagreement between them, and only one of difference—namely, Susan Barland. Eady is very fond of her, as her poor sister who died was, and as Aunt Judith was; she likes to have Susan with her in the long evenings, when she does not feel strong enough to meet the company in the drawing-room, and to ask her questions about the dead father and mother, of whom, of course, she remembers nothing.

But, taught by experience, Susan is very reticent and cautious in her replies. Edith is not at all alarmed about herself in the sense of fear, but she has an impression that she shall be very short-lived. And if she has really this hereditary malady, it behooves her to provide against the worst. She makes up her mind that directly she becomes of age she will make her will. She need not now give Spencer the money she had designed for him (though she will take care he has all he needs), for she feels that he will not have long to wait for it, and she will leave it him by bequest. He shall have half her fortune, and her dear step-mother the other half. That will show, when she is gone, how gratefully she felt toward her and hers. When that is once done, no matter what happens, the dearest wish of her young heart will then have been accomplished.

In the autumn preceding her majority Eady was taken abroad, and in the winter returned to London, where her coming of age was to be celebrated. She had not seen Spencer for nearly four months, and hardly recognized the handsome, manly young fellow who held out eager arms to welcome her. For the first time, she returned his embrace with some timidity. Since he had grown so preposterously tall, it struck her that she must really give up kissing him; but, although Eady was also become more womanly, the same idea by no means occurred to Spencer. He was rapturously and irrevocably in love with her, and it was no wonder. A more beautiful and elegant young woman had not made her appearance in the world of fashion since her step-mother—a beauty of a very different class, however—made her debut. She was somewhat slight in figure, but very animated and *spirituelle*-looking. At the great entertainment which was given upon her birthday—a very magnificent affair, and one which showed, as every body allowed, that Lady Luttrell was prepared to do her

duty by her after all—she was the most admired of all the daughters of fashion. It was jealously remarked, indeed, that it was not quite good taste thus to bear the bell away in one's own house; though Eady could not help being so exquisitely beautiful, nor refuse to wear the splendid attire that became her so well, and which was her step-mother's own gift. Lord Luttrell was not present; he was angry that his advice with respect to getting the girl married before her majority had been disregarded, and he could not see any use in being bored with entertaining people. But his popularity had long been on the wane, and he was little missed, while Spencer made a much more attractive substitute. Altogether, the fête was a great success.

The very next morning, after their late breakfast, Edith informed Lady Luttrell that the first use she wished to make of her independence was to send for a lawyer and give him instructions for her will.

"Your will, my darling!" smiled Gwendoline. "What makes you think of wills? I should have thought that marriage settlements—if your thoughts must needs take a legal direction—would have rather been running in your mind. I wish you could have heard half the pretty things that were said of you in *my* ear last night."

"I would like to see the lawyer, nevertheless," said Eady, simply. "I am of age now, you see, my dear Lady Luttrell, and one never knows what may happen."

Gwendoline still made some faint show of resistance, but eventually gave way, with an eulogistic remark upon the young girl's forethought and wisdom. Some people foolishly shrank from making their wills, as though their doing so could make them more liable to death; and others held it a bad omen. She was glad to see her Eady had no such foolish fancies, and was so sensible and prudent.

So Mr. Mumm, of the great firm of Mumm and Chance, who act for half the noble families in England, and for the Luttrells among them, was sent for forthwith, and Edith was closeted with him for two mortal hours, during which impatient Spencer more than once knocked at the door, with eager inquiries as to when that "stupid business" would be over, and leave her free to ride with him in the park, and without the slightest suspicion that the affair which engaged this affectionate creature was the bequeathing him nearly nine thousand a year. At last her directions were made plain, and the man of law departed, promising to bring the deed, duly drawn up, to Glen Druid, whither they were on the point of departing, for her signature and execution.

On the ensuing day they left town for what was now her own home. There were great rejoicings there also in honor of the young heiress, and she was admired by all at least as much as she had been in town. But Mrs. Barland, who was now resident at Glen Druid, remarked that her darling, although more beautiful than ever, was looking far from well. Eady was indeed by no means in good health; but she was also fidgety and nervous about her will. Within the week, however, the lawyer arrived, according to promise, and that document was duly executed.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LISTENER THAT HEARS GOOD OF HERSELF.

The change in Miss Eady's looks when she had "made all safe, whatever happened," with respect to the disposal of her fortune, was so striking, that Susan Barland could not fail to remark upon it when they were next alone together. "You are peaky and fragile enough still, my darling, and will want a deal of nursing; but you certainly have picked up most uncommon since you came home from that horrid London: you are not like the same young lady."

"Indeed, Susan," returned Edith smiling, "I am afraid I am the very same, and likely to give every body about me a great deal of trouble, though I don't think it will be for long."

"Lor, Miss Eady, how can you talk so? you make my blood run cold. Just as I was comforting myself, too, with how much clearer and brighter you looked."

"Well, the fact is, Susan, there has been a great weight just taken off my mind. I have been afraid for these many months that I should never live to be of age; and when I did, I was still more apprehensive that the thing for which I wished to come of age would never be accomplished. But now I am thankful to say I have no anxiety about any thing."

"You surely have never been making your will, Miss Edith?" inquired Susan, excitedly.

"Yes, I have. Why not?"

"Well, there is no reason 'why not,' of course; only it seems a strange thing for so young a person to do, and to have been so eager about;" and Susan involuntarily sunk her voice, and cautiously looked round her as she added, "You were not set on to do it by any one, Miss Eady, were you?"

"Certainly not, Susan. Who should have set me on?"

"And how have you left your money, Miss Eady?"

The simplicity of this inquiry caused Edith to laugh heartily. "Well, my dear Susan, I don't mind telling *you*, though I don't think it is usual for people to make such revelations. In the first place, I have left to Susan Barland, my dear mother's and sister's faithful friend and mine, the sum of five hundred pounds."

"Heaven grant I may never inherit it!" said Susan, fervently.

"If you are going to say that, instead of 'Amen,' to all my testamentary intentions," said Edith, smiling, "I had better not say any thing more about them."

"Please go on, if you don't mind, Miss Eady," urged the other, gravely. "I should like to hear so much."

"I had no idea you were so inquisitive, Susan. Well, there are some other little bequests, such as that I have mentioned; but with those exceptions, I have divided all I have into two portions, and left one to dear Lady Luttrell, and one to Spencer."

"You surely have never done that!" gasped Susan. "Oh, tell me you are only in joke—that you are not in earnest, dear Miss Eady?"

"But I *am* in earnest, Susan. And why not? To whom else should I leave my fortune but to those I love, and who have been so kind to me? Dear papa had no relatives, except a very distant cousin or two, who have never, perhaps, heard of

my existence, and I am sure he would have approved of what I have done."

A cold dew sat on Susan's forehead. She trembled for her darling, and yet she was at her wits' end what to do. Her sole hope, as it seemed to her, lay in the answer to her next question, which she put, however, as calmly as she could.

"Does her ladyship know of this will, Eady?"

"She is aware that I have made a will, but does not know the provisions of it."

Susan did not answer; she was debating within herself whether she should boldly entreat the girl to represent to her stepmother that she had thought it right to leave all her fortune to the Ferrier blood, from whence it came; but what argument could she urge in favor of such a course, and how was she to persuade straightforward Eady to dissimulate, with one, too, to whom she was so much attached as she was to Lady Luttrell?

Fortunately, Edith did not notice her perplexity, being herself full of solemn though not sombre thoughts. "I can not think," said she, "why you, Susan, who are so serious in your ideas, should wonder at my having provided against the common lot. I hope you are not one of those superstitious folks that dear Lady Luttrell spoke of when I first mentioned the subject, who think that the act of making a will brings one nearer to death. You don't think *that*, Susan, surely, do you?"

"I don't know," cried Susan, wildly; "don't ask me. I have heard of such things. Oh dear, oh dear!"

"This is very silly of you, Susan," said Edith, gravely; "and I gave you credit for more sense."

"But, my dear Miss Eady, you yourself told me you had a presentiment—a dreadful notion of being like to die."

"It is not a dreadful one, Susan," returned the young girl, calmly, "nor is it a mere morbid fancy. It is surely not likely—to look at me—that I should be a long-lived person; and did not my poor father die of this very disease which the doctors say I have inherited?"

"It is said so, Miss Eady."

"Well, and did not my dear mother, who, as you have often said, was the very image of me, die young, and our sweet Marian also? I am sure I have no wish to live except in so far as I can make those who love me happy by it; and perhaps I should do them more good by dying. But, at the same time, I am not going to die on purpose, you silly Susan. Don't you see?"

Susan answered quietly that she saw that, and only hoped that her dear Miss Eady would be more cheerful about herself. But she, too, had now a presentiment in her turn; she was thoroughly convinced that her darling's life was in danger in quite another way than she herself suspected, and resolutely made up her mind to ward it from her all she could. She did not dare speak farther just now; but she determined that this victim at least should not be sacrificed without due warning. She was fortunately under the same roof with her, and could watch over her day and night. Lady Luttrell was a terrible foe, but Susan's long cessation from hostilities and seeming submission had reaped this much of good, that she was no longer suspected by her. She was now treated with such perfect indifference that Lady Luttrell appeared almost unconscious of her existence.

Gwendoline, indeed, had now scarcely a thought

for any human creature save Spencer, herself, and Edith, to whom her regards fell in that order. To all the rest of the world she was become a stern, hard, but irreproachable woman, with a very sharp eye to money. Notwithstanding her still marvelous beauty and stately manners, she had become in some degree vulgarized. Her passion for Piers had been, after all, in some sort—notwithstanding that it wrought such ruin—a refining and humanizing influence, and it was now trodden under foot. People of her own class noticed that "she had got over all that nonsense about her husband;" and they were right. She lived, in their sight, on terms of distant courtesy with him, and in open contempt and bitterness when they were alone. The only tender link between her and humanity was now her son. She was wholly wrapped up in and devoted to him. She would have laid down her life for him; and if she had thought there was still any hope of salvation for her soul (a question, however, that never suggested itself), she would have sacrificed that also for his sake.

Spencer, as much older than his years in mind as he was in external appearance, was very fond of his mother, but by no means unaware that there was something strange about her—something in her nature that not only kept her aloof from others, but even kept *him* aloof from *her*. He had never heard from her lips any of those tender reminiscences which mothers love to relate to their children. She was reticent about her past, and all who had been concerned with it. She had her own thoughts, her own ways, and her own work to do; and yet she seemed to have an insuperable objection to be left alone; she never *was* alone by day now, for even when she believed herself to be so, Susan Barland followed her like her shadow. Though, with all her watchfulness and keen observation, the latter could not discover that Lady Luttrell possessed any absolute knowledge of the contents of her stepdaughter's will, yet her suspicion did not relax. The more she reflected on the matter, the more important it seemed to her that Miss Eady should keep her testamentary intentions secret; and the first opportunity she had of urging this, she seized accordingly. It was while she was attending to her young lady's toilet, late one morning, when Edith had had her breakfast, as was now often the case, in her own room, and the rest of the household were engaged elsewhere. Through the double window, Lady Luttrell could be seen walking to and fro upon the upper terrace with Spencer, and Edith had made some admiring remark upon the affection that existed between the pair.

"Yes, Miss Eady, it is very pleasant to see it," answered Susan, "and yet their love for one another does not seem to be of the same sort."

"How so, Susan?"

"Well, if you have not noticed it yourself, Miss Eady, I can scarcely explain it. But, as it strikes me, Lady Luttrell's love is passionful-like, and quite independent of its being deserved."

"And yet you know she is fond of *me*, Susan," said Edith, smiling. "Really, you are not inclined to be complimentary to any body this morning, it seems. Now, what have you got to say against Spencer?"

"Well, nothing, my dear; I only wish all belonging to him was like him. But, with respect to what I was saying about the difference in the

affection of those two, his love could never be placed long where it was unmerited—that is, not if he knew it to be so. He is always quiet and respectful enough, for instance, before my lord—although, when there has been a breeze between them, I have seen him stand up stiff enough upon his mother's side; but it is plain that he and his father do not hit it off. He does not love him, because he can not honor him."

"Lord Luttrell gives himself very little pains to conciliate Spencer," observed Edith, "and, indeed, takes little notice of him at all."

"That is very true, Miss Eady; but it would be all the same if my lord pretended to love him ever so. There could be nobody who strove to make himself more pleasant to Mr. Spencer when he was a lad than did Barnes the coachman; he was quite a slave to him, and not for the mere sake of currying favor, as I honestly believe, but because he was really fond of him; and yet, when that story came out about Barnes's ill treatment of the stable help—beating and swearing at the poor fellow all day as he did—Mr. Spencer would not have another word to say to him. I do believe if his own mother were to behave ill, and lose his respect—"

"Hush, Susan; we will not even suppose such a thing," said Edith, gravely. "Lady Luttrell may not be a favorite of yours, but she is incapable of any ill conduct; and not only that," added the young girl, with grateful enthusiasm; "it is not in her outward behavior alone that she is so admirable; her feelings, as I have reason to know, are particularly refined and delicate."

"No doubt, Miss Eady," returned the other, quietly; "and that reminds me to ask you a question: you have not told her ladyship, I hope, of how you have left your money?"

"No, Susan, I have not. But why should you hope any thing of the kind?"

Ah! why, indeed? That question was not put by Eady alone, but by another, and with infinitely more of solicitude for the reply. Gwendoline had come in from her walk while the two were talking, and was even now at the threshold of her stepdaughter's chamber. She had come up as usual to inquire how she had passed the night, and her footsteps upon the thick carpeted stair had escaped even the watchful Susan, whose mind, besides, was just then engrossed with the business she had on hand. Lady Luttrell had found the door open, and was about to lift the curtain that hung across it, to secure the delicate girl from draughts of air, when Susan's inquiry met her ear. No wonder, then, that with raised finger, as though in warning to her own wary self, and head inclined, she echoed Edith's counter-question: "Why should you hope that I have not told my stepmother how I have left my money?" The face of the listener was very white and serious, and her lips closed tightly together as she awaited the reply.

"Well, because, Miss Eady, it would not be a nice thing to do. For since, as you say, her ladyship is so refined and delicate in her feelings, it would grieve and trouble her, I am sure, if she knew that you had done so much—I mean so very much—for her and hers. Half to your stepmother, and half to Mr. Spencer, is such a great bequest, I am sure it would greatly annoy her, even if she did not absolutely insist upon some alteration."

"Perhaps you are right, Susan," said Edith, reflectively, "although I really don't see why it should be so. Lady Luttrell has a perfect right to all that I can do to show my affection for her; but I will take your advice, and keep the matter secret."

Lady Luttrell's quick ear caught the approach of a servant, and she moved noiselessly away; but she had already heard enough. Edith had left her fortune, then, in equal parts to herself and Spencer. That was great news indeed. And then as to this woman, Susan—of whom, when she had heard her put that question, she had really almost begun to be again suspicious—what a poor fool, with her imputations of delicacy and scrupulous fine feelings, was she! She need certainly entertain no apprehensions for the future upon her account.

For even the quickened intelligence of Gwendoline had seen no other than the apparent motive in Susan's advice to Edith, and was, on her part, no less in a fool's paradise than was poor Susan, who had murmured to herself, "Thank heaven!" when her dear Miss Eady had promised not to inform her stepmother of her kind intentions, at the very moment that the secret was revealed and the mischief done. However great and imminent, therefore, might be Edith's peril, the faithful ally that she had about her was unsuspected, and all the more so in that she had involuntarily absolved herself from suspicion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TWO INTERVIEWS.

SPENCER was at Cambridge, and Lady Luttrell and her stepdaughter alone at Glen Druid, when evil news came from my lord in town. There never was any good news from him or of him nowadays, or tidings of any sort which Gwendoline cared to hear, but this was the worst news that had yet arrived. He wrote to her to say that his luck had been more against him than ever, and that in endeavoring to reconspire himself at Newmarket upon a "moral certainty," he had lost a frightful sum. He was, in fact, unless she helped him at once, and largely, a ruined man; nor was even this the worst; he hinted, though so darkly that few but the keen eyes for which his words were written could have fathomed his meaning, that he had had the folly (for so he termed it, knowing that she would surely help him out of the "scrape") to forge an acceptance of a bill. So terrible was his strait, that he, for the first time, condescended to express some sorrow for his past behavior toward her, and to promise amendment for the future; "only," he concluded, "for any sake, raise this money, no matter at what cost." There was also a postscript of two words; "Try Edith."

For a few moments Gwendoline hesitated: she stood alone in her boudoir, one hand caressing her fair, unyielding face, and the other resting softly upon the velvet table; but she was not considering her husband's proposition at all. She had made up her mind as to that on the first instant, and the answer might have been read in her scornful eyes. "No, sir, not now; the time is past in any case, but certainly not now, when whatever I give you must needs be taken from

what will be my own or Spencer's." She was only debating within herself whether she should keep this letter with its fatal admission to hold over him as a menace for the future, to have used against him, if need were, by the man he had robbed, or whether she should destroy it. Finally, however, she tore the letter up into the smallest shreds, and then sat down to write her reply. It was quite out of the question, she wrote, that she could ask Edith to advance so enormous a sum; indeed, she felt quite sure that the girl would refuse to be so pillaged. He must help himself out of the affair how he could. The best advice she could give him was, for the present at least, to go abroad. She would recommend Sweden, where there was capercaillie-shooting and no international treaty with respect to the surrender of criminals.

It would be bitter counsel, yet one which she knew he must needs take, and both reflections pleased her. She wanted him at home less than ever just now, for she had a plan of her own in view which this news urged her to execute, and it was one that was easier to effect without spectators. She was for once even glad that Spencer was not at home.

Edith, always delicate, and often dejected, was now become more of an invalid than ever. She was surrounded with all those safeguards and precautions which, in the case of those who are only ailing, do at least as much harm in depressing the patient as they do good. The few people who came to visit the gentle girl were mysteriously informed that she was not to be excited; and by many a sad shake of the head and melancholy smile her hopeless condition was implied. Edith, in fact, was in a fair way of being killed with kindness—or what so resembled it as to be taken for such even by its object—when a most unexpected event took place: Lord Luttrell himself suddenly appeared at Glen Druid, accompanied by Spencer. Her husband had not replied to her last letter, nor had Gwendoline expected him to do so. She had pictured him to herself reading it with furious eyes, crumpling it up with a savage malediction upon herself and all the world, and then betaking himself to flight abroad. Yet here he was, and what seemed even more inopportune to her just then, he had brought their son with him. The long vacation had not yet commenced, and the latter's appearance was, therefore, even still less accountable.

Lord Luttrell and his wife greeted one another as usual; they had stereotyped smiles and phrases for all such interviews before folks; but the instant that Spencer had received and returned his mother's affectionate embrace, and without one word in explanation of his presence, he cried, "Where's Eady?"

"She is gone for a little walk upon the Warrior's Helm, my darling," replied she, gravely. "I am afraid you will find her much altered; she is certainly far from well."

Spencer bounded off with a pale face, and met the young girl on the very spot once sacred to the passion of Mr. Samuel Barland.

It was one of those warm and lovely days which are given to us in May, as if in foretaste of the midsummer; and yet she had sought this place for shelter, for even the west wind made her shiver.

"My own sweet darling!" cried Spencer,

shocked at her wan cheeks, the glad flush on which, however, did not render her less beautiful, "how is it that I hear such sad news of you? I must never, never leave you again!"

His arms were open, and she had fallen into them almost before she was aware. The sudden joy of seeing him, and the recollection of her own weakness, as much as her weakness itself, gave her no other choice. She had scarcely strength to stand upright, far less to disengage herself from his embrace; but, for his part, he willingly took her passiveness for consent. "Oh, how long I have loved you, my own Eady!" murmured he, and yet, though you must have known it, you have never until now shown that you returned it. There, sit down, and tell me all about your own dear self; and promise me, oh promise me, to soon get well and strong!"

He placed her tenderly upon the seat cut in the solid rock, from which nothing could be seen but the wide Atlantic, and on it but a few distant sails, and knelt down at her feet.

"Spencer," gasped she, "dear Spencer, you are surely not in earnest to speak thus! I always loved you like a brother; but—you are so young—and I—"

"And you so old! Oh yes, you look quite old, my darling, being so stout and masculine!" answered he, with a loving smile. "I should think, if I did not know your age, and judging from your cunning worldly look, that you were fifteen."

"But I am twenty-two, and more, dear Spencer, and you are but eighteen. This is only a boyish fancy of yours, and—"

"A fancy!" broke in the other, seizing her one ungloved finger, and placing upon it, in spite of all her resistance, an opal ring. "'If to have dreamed by night, and thought of you by day,' for all my life, dear Eady—if to have loved you better than my own mother, when I was still in the nursery, and you but my child-playmate—if to have seen your sweet face shining before me when I have been doing my duty, and to have felt it averted from me when I have been doing wrong—if to have had you for my guardian angel from my birth, and to have been grateful for it with my whole soul—is a boyish fancy, then indeed have I had that for you. But of late years, Eady, and since I have grown to be a man, I have felt sure—I have known—and oh, the dear delight of that sweet knowledge—I have known whom I love, and who will be my wife!"

To look at him kneeling before her, with his brown curls thrown back from his bonnie face, and his passionate, pleading eyes, was a spectacle too bright and tender for woman's heart to resist. Edith leaned forward and kissed his forehead. But she had not given up all show of resistance yet.

"I do believe you love me, Spencer, or at least that you think you do, but I can not permit you to be thus carried away by impulse. You are yet but a boy in years."

"Time will cure that, my pretty one."

"Yes; but there is one thing that it will not cure, Spencer dear, but very much the reverse; there is the disparity in our years. I shall be an old woman when you—" "No," thought Edith to herself, and for the first time in her life this reflection gave her a bitter pang, "I shall never be an old woman, nor perhaps shall I even live to marry him."

"Disparity, my darling Eady!" returned Spencer, gravely; "do not let us talk of disparities, because, in that case, I shall indeed scarcely venture to seek my own happiness; for you, you know, are an heiress, though Heaven is my witness that I should love you all the same if you had not a shilling; and I—the Luttrells were always poor—and I shall be *very* poor, Eady—the poorest of any of them. My father owes debts which, when I come of age, I must needs pay. He came to Cambridge to me about them, and it is on that account I am now here."

"But let *me* pay them," exclaimed Edith, tenderly: "my money is yours in any case, my darling. Why not?"

"No, Eady, no," replied the young man, proudly. "My father's debts—so far as it is possible—must be paid by my father's son. I only mentioned the circumstance because you began to talk about disparities, my darling—and there is certainly a very important disparity between us, which is, however, not one of years. But you won't refuse me because you are such a great heiress, Eady, *will you?*"

Whether Edith intended to reply that she would not refuse him upon that account, or that she would not refuse him at all, when she put her arms about his neck and whispered, "No, darling," may be a question for the grammarian; but Spencer Nostyn, for his part, certainly did not entertain a doubt about it, and he thanked her for her reply in love's time-honored fashion. On none of the shores that fringe the vast Atlantic was a more happy pair than they who now sat together in that rocky bower, hand clasped in hand, and lip pressed to cheek. A new life seemed to have begun for both of them.

In the mean time, a very different sort of interview was taking place within doors—a scene of violence and recrimination between Lord and Lady Luttrell, such as had had hitherto no parallel even beneath that unhappy roof. The former exhausted all his arts in vain to obtain better terms for himself than her letter to him had indicated; and when they failed, he gave the reins to his insolent fury; but she never wavered for an instant. The same cold look of scorn confronted him when he invoked her pity, and reminded her of their dead passion, as when he raved, just as the grim cliff beneath them defied ocean, alike when it fawned or raged. And yet she was angry too, and twice was almost moved to give her wrath full utterance. Once when he told her he had brought Spencer away from Cambridge with the intention of using *his* influence with Edith, since Gwendoline refused to employ hers; and again when he let her know that his hint about the forged acceptance (though the temptation had actually occurred to him) was a lie, designed in part to enhance the greatness of his necessity, and in part to prove her—whether indeed she would see him suffer disgrace and exile rather than speak a few soft words for him to a girl with whom her wish was law. She was furious then, not at his deception, but at the disappointment of finding he was still free to plague her. If the crooking of her little finger at that moment would have saved him from the gallows, she would have kept it straight in splints; yet all she said was, "I am indeed surprised to hear that you resisted a temptation, Luttrell, but I am not surprised you lied."

If it was terrible to see this pair, still so well favored and so young, distorted with hate and scorn of one another, while health, and wealth, and rank, and all that men call good, seemed to be theirs, what must needs their condition be, still unwillingly yoked together, should poverty, and pain, and weight of years befall them!

CHAPTER XXXII.

RENOUNCED.

NOTWITHSTANDING the violence of the emotions which had agitated Lord and Lady Luttrell, there was no trace of storm to be seen in either when they appeared that evening. Eady herself had come down to dinner, though she now usually took her meals above stairs, and before *her*, of all people, it was expedient to show no ill-feeling. My lord, indeed, whose temper had suffered of late years by reason of his "confounded luck," was not at all times so particular, but on this occasion he was especially courteous and winning in his manner. Smooth and polished as he might be, however, Edith well knew that he was at heart a stone. He had neither the perseverance nor the powers of dissimulation that Gwendoline possessed, while the fascinations on which he so justly prided himself were quite thrown away upon the simple-hearted heiress. Lady Luttrell had no need to alter her behavior toward her stepdaughter for any purpose of conciliation; it was marked by the same tender care for her health and comfort as usual, and no more. It had, however, been necessary for her to apply another petal or two to those false rose-leaves which now almost habitually hid the pallor of her cheeks; and while she seemed so delicately to ply her knife and fork, she held them with a clutch of steel. The conversation at table, which was of a light and sparkling sort, was almost entirely maintained by my lord and lady, and certainly did the utmost credit to their self-command. Spencer and Eady spoke but little, but their thoughts were none the less agreeable upon that account. - It had been agreed between them that their engagement should not at present be made known to Lord and Lady Luttrell; there was the question of time to be still settled between them, Edith being of opinion that Spencer should not marry till he came of age, and thoroughly "knew his own mind;" and Spencer opining that a month hence would be quite a sufficient limit. "They were not," he urged, "like young people who had any need to see something more of one another before marriage; and why should they not be made happy at once?" It was an agreeable subject enough for their discussion, and it was settled between them that they should talk it over together the next day upon the Warrior's Helm; and, in the mean time, each had promised to think about it—which, it must be allowed, they were both performing.

The light was very bright in Eady's eyes that night, and her stepmother noticed it to Spencer with a sigh, and a comment upon the delicacy of constitution it portended; when, somewhat to her surprise, he rallied her upon her melancholy forebodings, and remarked that though she was "always killing people," dear Eady would not fulfill her dismal prophecies, but be a strong woman

yet. Gwendoline shook her head and hoped it might be so, "for all their sakes."

They sat up in the drawing-room that night quite late—that is, for Glen Druid—and Lady Luttrell had gently to remind her stepdaughter of the imprudence she was therein committing.

The docile girl immediately prepared to retire. Gwendoline kissed her on the forehead in answer to her affectionate embrace. Lord Luttrell took her hand and held it, while he passed a graceful compliment upon her improved looks. Spencer gave her fairy fingers one quick, meaning pressure, that made her young heart beat, she scarce knew why.

Alone with faithful Susan, she yearned to reveal to her her great happiness—the new-found joy that buoyed her spirits, and seemed to give new life to her very frame. And yet she hesitated to do so; this secret of her soul seemed to be so sacred. She purposely delayed her toilet far beyond the usual time. "I had expected Lady Luttrell to bring me some cough-mixture," said she, "but I suppose she has forgotten it."

"Shall I fetch it, dear Miss Eady?"

"No, Susan. My cough is not troublesome; indeed, I have not felt so well for many a day; and I am not sorry to think that we are quite alone to-night. I want to have a talk with you, Susan."

"Let us talk in the morning, my darling," returned the affectionate creature; "for, though I love a chat with you of all things, yet it is much better that you should have your sleep."

"I should not sleep to-night, Susan, even if you left me. My mind is full of thoughts; not presentiments or 'fallals,' as you call them, but thoughts of the past. How old did you tell me my dear mother was when she married papa?"

"Lor, Miss Eady, she was as young—as young—she was always a child to look at—much like you are, up to the very day of her death; but when she married she was a child indeed; two or three years younger than you are; when she died, indeed, she was scarcely older. But don't you go thinking of *that*."

"I am not thinking of her death, Susan, but of her marriage."

"And a much better thing for a young lady to have on her mind," said Susan, approvingly. "Well, your papa was as good a husband as ever breathed; but he certainly was a deal too old for her. There ought never to be such a great difference between man and wife, in my opinion. I hope you will never marry an old man, Miss Eady."

Edith smiled. "Still, Susan, one may err in the other direction, and marry too young a one; that would be still worse, would it not?"

"Certainly not, Miss Eady. My poor Samuel was just a year or two younger than myself, and it was all the better for him. A man wants in a wife one to whom he can look up and ask advice from, and not a mere plaything. If ever I was to marry again—which, however, I am not fool enough to do, for I have seen the evil of it in others—I should still choose a young man for my husband. You're laughing, Miss Eady—thinking, belike, that I could not get one. But I could if I would—and plenty of them. My poor Samuel was not so saving as I could have wished him; but I always guided him in money matters, and we thrived accordingly; and now, since I have

been with you, I have saved money again. So you see I am a sort of heiress, like yourself, miss, and there is no lack of suitors with such as us."

Edith, shaking with inward laughter at this naïve comparison, did not trust herself to speak; and Susan, nothing loath to pursue a subject upon which she considered herself as an authority, continued her matrimonial discourse.

"Now, what you have to guard against, Miss Eady, is the being sought in marriage for your money, and not for yourself. In my case, there can be no doubt about the matter; when any of those impudent fellows below stairs begin to praise me, I know that they are really thinking of my little freehold at St. Medards, and the share or two which they know I happen to have in Grendallack; but with you it will be more difficult to separate chaff from corn. You may well think, when some fine gentleman protests that you are the very apple of his eye, that you *are* his apple—and yet you mayn't be, my darling, for all that. The advice I would give to you, Miss Eady, supposing I was to take any liberty of the kind, would be this: Don't be in a hurry to say 'Yes' to any such folk. You can marry a fortune-hunter—if you *must* marry one—at two-and-forty just as well as at two-and-twenty; for you will be equally attractive in his view at any age, and, indeed, when you are *very* old (as I have seen with my own eyes), quite charming. But, on the other hand, if you chance to meet with a young fellow who has an honest heart, and you have reason to believe it's inclined toward you for something else than your great income (you can have your money all settled upon yourself, you know, and give him an allowance, the amount of which might depend upon his good behavior), well, then, I say, no matter though he is as poor as a kirk-mouse, just marry him."

"And that is really your advice, Susan, is it?" inquired Edith, smiling.

"Yes, my darling," returned the widow, simply; "and the sooner you find such a young gentleman to take care of you," added she, with a sigh, "the sooner I shall be pleased, Heaven knows."

"And supposing I *have* found such a one, Susan?" said Edith, softly—"just such a one as you speak of, who has no thought of greed, and would love me all the same though I were penniless; one that I have known so long that I can not be mistaken in him; one whom I have loved as it were without even knowing it, until he asked the question with his own sweet lips?"

"Oh, who is it, Miss Eady?" cried Susan, trembling with impatience. "Dear, dear, how pleased I am! How happy shall I be when you are safely married, and with a husband to look after you, better than a poor woman like me can do—though he will hardly love you more, Heaven knows. Oh, my darling, do I know him? have I seen him? But, then, that is not likely, of course. He is doubtless some young gentleman in town."

"No, Susan, dear, he is not; he loves town no better than I do, which is not at all; and you have seen him often, and know him very well, and like him very much. What! can't you guess my secret even now, Susan? Why, who can it be but Spencer?"

"Spencer!" shrieked Susan Barland, starting from her chair, and clasping her hands wildly,

"Not Spencer Mostyn—not Lady Luttrell's son!"

"Who else, Susan? what can you mean? Has he not earned my love? and is he not worthy of it? I tell you it is *I*, rather, who am not worthy of him—the brightest and best of men! What have you—what has any one—to say against dear Spencer?"

For the first time in all her life Edith Ferrier's eyes flashed with fierce scorn; her slender frame was drawn to its full height; her childish face crimsoned with jealous rage.

"My own darling Miss Eady," cried Susan, trembling violently, "don't look like that, or you will break my heart. I know no harm of Mr. Spencer, and, indeed, nothing but good. But you must never marry him—indeed, indeed, you must not."

"You must be mad, Susan," answered Edith, haughtily. "How dare you say such words? Not marry Spencer—he that is my love, my life, my all. Why not? But no; I will not listen to you."

"You must—you must, Miss Eady," replied Susan, wringing her hands. "There is something—not his fault—but something—oh, great heaven! how shall I tell her? It's his birth, Miss Eady: it's because he is his mother's son that you can never wed him."

"Why not?"

"Because she killed your father," gasped Susan, hoarsely. "Yes—poisoned him; she did it, as sure as I am a living woman. And she has it in her mind to poison you."

Edith's nerves, wound up already to a pitch far beyond their wont, here entirely gave way, and she sank upon the floor in violent hysterics.

Gwendoline, who was on her way to her step-daughter's chamber at that very moment, was the first to arrive; but Spencer, alarmed by the young girl's shrieks, and winged by love, was almost as quick as she.

"What is the matter, Eady?"

"My own darling, what is the matter?"

Robed in her white dressing-gown, with her long dark tresses hanging down her back and on the ground about her, Edith raised herself upon one elbow, and gazed upon Lady Luttrell with eyes that seemed to be starting out of their sockets. "The matter!" groaned she. "Oh grant, kind Heaven, that this woman here be mad, or else—She says that you—you, Lady Luttrell—killed my father—your own husband—poisoned him."

"She lies," cried Spencer, haughtily.

"Young man, I wish I did," answered Susan, solemnly; "as I shall have to answer for my sins on judgment-day, I swear she did it. I denounce her as the murderess of my master; I accuse her—" And here, as though actuated by an uncontrollable impulse, she rushed up to Lady Luttrell, and seized her firmly by the wrist. "This woman has a vial of poison in her hand, with which she was to have slain Miss Eady this very night! Help, help me, Mr. Spencer!"

It was a terrible sight, for Gwendoline had at last awakened from the dull torpor of terror into which the suddenness of the charges brought against her had cast both body and mind, and was getting the better of the waiting-woman in the struggle. But Spencer strode forward, and with his own hands unclenched his mother's fingers, and drew the vial forth.

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Then Gwendoline, not knowing how little was known, and how much guessed, and overcome with frantic terror, fell down upon her knees before Edith. "I have done my duty to you, girl," exclaimed she, appealingly, "for more than twenty years—"

"But with what motive?" struck in Susan, fiercely, and pointing to the vial, now in Spencer's grasp. Her defeat of long ago, and compelled reticence through half a lifetime, had transformed this woman into a very Nemesis. "Your whole life, since you slew her father, has been an acted lie," cried she, the consciousness that she was the instrument of divine retribution (rather than mere revengeful triumph) elevating her very style: "your every kindness was but feigned to smooth the way to cruelty; your very love was hate."

"It was *not* hate," urged Gwendoline, passionately; "I swear I did not hate her, and if I did—oh Spencer, my own darling boy—it was only for your sake." She turned toward her son, and caught his hand, and strove to carry it to her lips, but he snatched it from her with a gesture of abhorrence, and she sank groveling upon the floor.

"You hated Eady for my sake!" cried he; "then I hate you for hers!"

That ill-judged and miserable excuse of hers had filled his cup of bitterness to overflow. His agony at seeing in the mother he had so loved and admired a wretch guilty of one murder, and convicted of devising another, contended within him with a lonesome sense of desolation and despair. She was not only a criminal, but her crime was of a nature to separate him forever from the only being who could otherwise have given him comfort. He saw his betrothed (as indeed she was) distracted with the idea of losing him forever, but still more overwhelmed with horror at that deed, the punishment of which would descend upon two innocent heads.

"Oh, spare me, spare me, Spencer!" moaned Gwendoline, feebly, "if not for my sake, still for your father's, who has no knowledge of these dreadful things."

"What is Lord Luttrell to me?" answered Spencer, sternly. "Father? What! one who has taken neither care nor thought for his child, and has taught him nothing but evil! No, I renounce him; I renounce you, woman! I solemnly swear that henceforth I have neither father nor mother, nor rank nor position, nor country nor home! I will betake myself under a borrowed name to some far land, where my only wish will be never to be recognized for what I am—for what you have made me—and never to see England more. I renounce, I abjure you all!"

With a low, moaning cry, that seemed the expiring wail of hope and life, Edith sank into Susan's arms.

"Not you, dearest," cried Spencer, passionately, and striding toward her—"not you, sweet Eady." But the poor girl was quite insensible to his frantic appeals, and even felt not the shower of feverish kisses which he rained upon her cheek. "Susan"—he whispered a few rapid words into the waiting-woman's ear, who answered mournfully: "It shall be done, sir—as soon as she has strength."

"Do you hear that, woman?" cried the young man, in a terrible voice, and casting a glance of

loathing at his still prostrate mother. "That you have not killed her already is not *your* fault;" and with that he rushed out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN TOWN FOR THE LAST TIME.

It was fortunate on all accounts that Edith's first hysterical shrieks had not roused the household; but the heavy curtain before the door had dulled them, so that they had only reached the ears of those of whom we have spoken. The rest of the tenants of Glen Druid were still wrapped in repose, and knew nothing of the terrible scene which we have just seen enacted—nothing of the hasty steps of their young master descending the stairs which they were destined never more to tread, and passing the threshold they were never more to cross. But Gwendoline listened to them with despairing anguish. She knew that he would never seek her face again; that she was henceforth doomed to be an object of detestation to the only human creature, save one—and that one worse than dead—whom she had ever loved. For her husband, she had sacrificed herself body and soul, and he had repaid her with ingratitude; for her son, she had been willing to sacrifice another, and for that she had justly earned his contempt and abhorrence. She still cowered abjectly upon the floor, watched with stern eyes by Susan Barland, in whose strong arms Edith yet reposed insensible, but not without some signs of returning consciousness.

"Do you not think," said Susan, with a significant glance at Eady's closed face, "that you had better leave us, Lady Luttrell?"

Roused by these words from her wretched reflections, but still bewildered and dismayed, Gwendoline stared at her without reply.

"Had you not better go, I say?" repeated Susan, fiercely, "or do you wish the sight of you to blast this innocent girl, and so to kill her that way?"

"No, no," said Gwendoline humbly; "I will go."

And she rose up slowly to her feet. It was pitiful to look upon her, notwithstanding all her wickedness. Her attitude was cringing and suppliant; the beauty of her smooth white face was marred by ignominious defeat; her once indomitable spirit broken; her soul swayed by abject fear. Even of her keen and scheming mind, nothing was left but the brute instinct of self-preservation.

"You—you and *she*," cried she, pointing to her stepdaughter with a trembling finger—"what is it you mean to do with me?"

For an instant, looking at the haggard face, and those wild beseeching eyes, so different from what she had always known them, the thought that Lady Luttrell was gone mad occurred to Susan, and she clasped her unconscious charge more closely to her bosom. "Do with you? What do you mean?" inquired she.

"You will denounce me?" answered Gwendoline, hoarsely. "He—my own son—abjured me, and why not you and she? I say, do you mean to give me up?"

"No, Lady Luttrell—no, for your son's sake, we will not. But you must leave this place at

once, and never see her more. That is the sole condition of my silence. Go!"

One twitch of mental agony drew back the lip that had so often curled in scorn, in fancied superiority over this very woman, as over so many other fellow-creatures, and then her face grew rigid once for all. Dismissed from her own roof by a menial, to whose constrained mercy she was thus indebted for her very existence, beggared, disgraced, abhorred, it was indeed a moment bitter enough to leave its gall in life's cup forever. It is said that, like that king who lost his son in days of old, but not through his own crimes, Lady Luttrell was never seen to smile again.

Still—so unrelenting was her righteous doom—she kept her wits. That very morning, long ere my lord was called, she had ordered a carriage out, and fled toward town, partly in performance of her exacted promise, and partly, perhaps, with the instinct that compels guilty wretches to hide their heads in cities. There was reason enough to leave Glen Druid, at all events. So, driving fast through wind and summer rain, she overtook, upon a barren moor, a young man walking swiftly and bare-headed. He kept his back toward her, but the first instant she caught sight of him she knew that it was Spencer; and her terror was, lest, as they passed by him, the coachman, recognizing his young master, should pull up, and her son should see her. But the man, who never dreamed that Mr. Spencer had been taken with the same mad fit as her ladyship to be up and out at day-break, and half-blinded with the rain, took no notice of the wayfarer, and so the carriage whirled by, its cowering inmate sunk between the seats and below the level of the window.

Lord Luttrell, furious and alarmed at Gwendoline's sudden flight, set out at once in pursuit, and reached town in a few hours after her own arrival. He found her alone at night, in the great drawing-room, which was brilliantly lit up, and sitting with her chair close to the wall. "What did this conduct mean?" was his imperious demand. "Why had he thus been left at Glen Druid, by both wife and son; with that lackadaisical young girl, too ill, it seemed, to see him, and not a soul to answer him a question? What, in the devil's name, did it all mean?"

Then Gwendoline, knowing that no subterfuge would then avail her by which she could explain the future, even though it might palliate the present, made confession of her awful crime. "It was twenty years ago, Luttrell," appealed the wretched woman, "when I was very young, and loathed my life, and I did it to be free to marry *you*, whom I loved with all my soul."

He shrank from her with stretched-out hands and shuddering face. The twenty years appeared to him but yesterday; she seemed a murderess with still unwashed hands. The mention of her love for him filled him with creeping terrors. He shivered at the remembrance of her caresses like one who has felt serpents' slime; and when she moved toward him with a yearning pitiful face, and besought him not to cast her from him, since it was for his sake that she had become what she was, he fled from her into the midnight streets.

"Oh coward, and cruel!" thought she, and not (had she argued it out) without reason. For it was men such as he and her father, who from

her earliest years had been about her, false, selfish, and heartless, who had taught her, by precept and example, to be all for self; and she had but followed their teaching to the bitter end. A murder more or less would not have stained their souls much blacker, nor probably, to gain their ends, would they have hesitated to have committed such a crime, had opportunity offered it with safety. They had often worse than slain fellow-creatures of her own sex.

Nor, indeed, was Lord Luttrell's sense of Gwendoline's guilt so dainty but that reflection caused him to think better of deserting her, with her large stock of jewelry for certain, and perchance that secret hoard of wealth at which we have heard him hint. He hated her, it was true, but then he had hated her before.

They lived together—as they were used to live—in name as man and wife, beneath the same roof, but passed one another on the stairs without speaking.

At last a letter came from Edith to Lady Luttrell which compelled their common attention.

"These are the last words you will ever read of mine," it ran. "I have given directions to Mr. Mumm for Glen Druid to be sold with its contents, as well as my town house, and all my effects that are in your keeping. I have also instructed him to pay you five thousand pounds—that is all you will ever have from me. I will never hear from you, nor, I trust, of you more."

This letter had no address within it, but bore the Paris post-mark.

"Is Spencer with her, think you?" inquired Lord Luttrell, gloomily.

"Perhaps; I think I heard him tell Susan to bring her from Glen Druid; I can not tell. I only know that I shall never see him more."

"There will be one less to keep," mused his lordship. "Still we can not exist in England upon this wretched pittance, even if I did not owe four times as much. We must live in France."

"Not France," sighed Gwendoline, with a shudder, "for see, she writes from France. Wherever else you please."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT CALYPSA FOR LIFE.

It is not in France, then, that Gwendoline and her husband dwell, but in a certain island off that coast where the French tongue is spoken (in the original), and where the people, if not French, are still less English. Let us call it Calypsa. The Calypsans are above all not English in this extraordinary particular—that the knowledge that a live lord and his lawful wife are dwelling in the midst of them moves them not one whit. They are too used to the honor, too accustomed to receive such titled exiles, to be impressed by the circumstance, and least of all to be favorably impressed. When members of the British aristocracy deign to visit Calypsa, it is well understood that they do so for one of three reasons—Debt, Drink, or the Divorce Court. They have placed the sea between themselves and their creditors; or they are dipsomaniacs; or they are awaiting certain proceedings in that court of law which

mitigates matrimony by releasing ladies of spirit from their vows, and enabling them (notwithstanding that they have made a mistake at starting) to marry whom they please after all. In the mean time, Calypsa is a favorite resort with—well, the injured parties. It is absolutely a *disadvantage* (if the British mind can grasp such a position) to wear a title at Calypsa. For what possible business, except a disreputable one—ask the sagacious inhabitants—can such a favored individual have *there*? You must owe twenty thousand pounds at the very least; or you must be a confirmed brandy-drinker; or you must be in the semi-matrimonial or expectant position at which we have delicately hinted.

They took stock in their uninterested and philosophic fashion of Lord and Lady Luttrell, and decided that they were, at all events, not in the last category. They were not even a semi-attached couple. It is said that poverty acquaints us with strange partners of bed and board; but how much more abhorrent is it when it *reacquaints* us with those from whom we have parted with scorn and loathing, and compels us to be their mates again! Terrible reunions, that no spirit of forgiveness or conciliation cements, but which necessity alone imposes. In their great town house in Mayfair or at Glen Druid, the knowledge that the same roof covered them had of late grown to both more or less irksome and intolerable, yet it had been possible to avoid meeting, to live each their several lives independent of one another; but now their narrow means forbade such isolation. The gay favorite of society—the most popular young noble of his day—was doomed forever to cleave to this woman, because he had no means of subsistence except what she afforded him; while Gwendoline, on her part, was quite aware how sordid was the link that alone bound him to her. Never, since the time of guilty Essex and his countess, had there been such a wretched pair. Calypsa is very beautiful; the purple sea surrounds it; the soft southern breezes kiss it. It has woods and streams, and dells and uplands, on a miniature scale indeed, but very charming. The earth is fruitful, the sky is blue and cloudless. One silver-sanded bay succeeds another all round its cliff-girt coast, each more fair than its predecessor, each more fit for haunt of goddess, for dance of sea-nymphs. But Lord and Lady Luttrell did not care for scenery. Nature was a dead letter to them; and the artificial existence, which was the only one they knew, was in Calypsa but a very melancholy imitation of that to which they had been accustomed. A drive in a hired conveyance; a walk on the shabby little jetty, to hear the brass band of five performers; the interchange of small hospitalities, at which shrimps were not unknown; scandal, which, in the absence of higher game, concerned itself with altogether vulgar people—these were the occupations of the visitors in Calypsa, for the inhabitants for the most part kept aloof from them. Imagine, in short, all the wretched frivolities of Mayfair and Brighton enacted on a contracted scale, and, as it were, below stairs. These things were almost as intolerable to the exiled pair as man and wife were to one another; even the one genuine excitement of the place—the rushing down to the pier-head when the packet came in—was denied them; they did not dare to do it, lest some folks just touching at Calypsa upon their

way to other scenes, or designing to spend a day or two there from curiosity, should recognize them in their fallen fortunes. With respect to Gwendoline, this was always possible. Even though her health is somewhat broken by unrest, she still retains her marvelous beauty: one might almost think that Nature, like some seeming gracious fairy, had at her birth proffered her that eternal dower, in lieu of aught else that woman should covet. But there was no one at Calypsa whom it was worth her while to please with it.

Lord Luttrell, on the other hand, is "dreadfully aged"—a conventional phrase, which, in his case, however, has a great significance. He is growing to be like Sir Guy Treherne before his time. His hair is grayer than his father-in-law's was ever seen to be, and his limbs are almost as shaky; nor is Time only to blame for this result—brandy is very cheap and good at Calypsa, and he indulges himself in that stimulant to excess. He has become dull, and even sottish, so that the pair rarely converse at all, or when they do it is upon some every-day affair that has no reference to their common past. But upon one occasion, when my lady, with her round dimpled arm in her white hand, was watching her apparently unconscious lord, as he sat and boozed, and wondering within herself how long he would last, and she be captive, he suddenly flamed up quite in the old way, and bade her try no tricks with him to shorten life. "If you kill me, you shall hang for it," said he, rudely. "I have left a document with my good friend the magistrate here, which entreats him, in case of my death, to see whether I have died by poison, and in that case to arrest you, Madame Smoothface. I am not an old fool like Ferrier."

It was curious that Gwendoline made no reply except that sharp twitch of the mouth which has replaced her smile for years. Perhaps, in that scheming brain of hers, some plan was really hatching for the dissolution of this second bond, that had become even more hateful than her first, even though it was no bar to fancied bliss; or perhaps she scorned to defend herself from such a charge. The idea once mooted, however, did not tend to smooth matters between the unhappy pair. He has never reproached her with it since; but in his cups he will sometimes look at her with a defiant air, and snap his taper fingers.

Such is Gwendoline's husband, such is her life, such is the Harvest she has reaped from the seed so carefully sown, so quickly ripened. She feels no remorse; she is too selfish to suffer from that cause; but the sense of disappointment—of her life's total failure—is bitter enough; and there is far worse than that within her. What has become of the only being whom she ever loved, save herself, and still loves, and whom her own wickedness has alone estranged from her? Where is her only son, her darling Spencer? Oh for one look at him, to erase the abiding vision of that drooping figure, plodding so wearily across the misty English moor as though bowed down by his mother's crime? *Where* is he? *How* is he? *What* is he doing? She shall never see—she shall never know.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFAR.

OUR scene changes to a far-distant spot from any to which this history has hitherto introduced us, and yet not so distant as so different; to a world which, although it belongs not to that called New, has nothing in common with the Old, and is therefore a most fitting home to those who would fain never be reminded of their English past—to Venezuela, where (in one of its three zones at least) the most exquisite beauties of nature are enjoyed without that penalty of ill health which she so often exacts for that privilege.

In that fair state is to be beheld, not only the world in little—for that can be seen wherever humanity dwells at all—but the three stages of man's development. There are the mighty forests where the wild hunter still supports his women-folk and children by his literal bow and spear; above them are the savannas, where pastoral life is to be witnessed on a scale of vastness beside which that of the patriarchs of old becomes insignificant and paltry; and there are the high valleys above them, where Agriculture is cultivated along with her half-sister Civilization. Imagine a great *estancia*—a farm of immense extent—on one of those superb uplands, that seem to look down like the Mount of Temptation upon all the glory of the world. Every color that diversifies the earth and makes it beautiful has its place there; not in mere streaks and patches, but in miles and masses of sublime splendor. We have heard of soil so rich that "if we tickle it with a hoe it straightway laughs in harvest," but here that witty and beautiful image is even more than realized. Without man's aid at all, the whole expanse presents the richest as well as the most varied vegetation.

In the extreme distance lie the dark purple spheres of sea, with many a "summer isle of Eden;" then the silver line of coast, with its vast plantations of sugar-canes, its shining woods—which are the glossy-leaved cacao—and its palm groves of prodigious height, with fruit in such clusters as only a strong man can lift.

On the next plateau are the virgin woods and the prairie, the illimitable green savanna. From the *hato*, or cattle-farm, belonging to the *estancia* of which we speak (but thousands of feet beneath it), a horseman might start at full gallop early in the morning, and not reach the verge of his master's property until nightfall. He would travel over meadow-land smooth as a garden lawn, amid troops of wild horses, and countless herds of wilder cattle, and by glittering ponds alive with all kinds of aquatic birds, and reflecting upon their clear surface the broad-leaved crowns of the fair palms towering above woods of laurel, while before, and behind, and around him stretches the great undulating plain, like a petrified sea of green.

But it is on the high valley that Nature has outspread her most glittering store of fruit and flower, of verdure and blossom; there the products of the earth are tropical, while the climate is temperate and wholesome; no stifling heat, no dangerous sun-darts, such as haunt the coastline, are to be apprehended; no fever spreads.

Bowered in green coolness, throned in mountainous calm, you look around upon a luxuriant blaze of vegetation. The orchard which sur-

rounds our estancia is the handsomest imaginable, and indeed, by such as have only seen the orchards of England, not to be imagined at all. The gleaming green of the cacao, with its cucumber-like pods, is contrasted with the crimson-flowered erythrina, such as at Glen Druid were seen a few feet high in boxes, but which here surmount the tallest trees, and glow above them like roofs of fire. In this orchard, which in size is almost a forest, and boasts of rocks and rivulets of its own, grow innumerable flowers, and especially those pretty parodies on nature and humanity—the air-plants; the gorgeous swan-flower, with its clusters of rich blossom; and the vanilla, with a perfume whose sweetness makes faint the air. The richest productions of the tropics flourish side by side with the most esteemed fruits of our own temperate climate—the orange and the apple, the pomegranate and the peach, the guava and the grape-vine. Unsurpassed in beauty as in flavor grows the chimoya, the fruit which has been likened to “lumps of flavored cream,” and of which it is well said that “not to have tasted it is not to know what fruit is.” Among these beautiful objects flutter in the scented air swarms of tiny humming-birds, so small, and at the same time so brilliant in hue, that you almost take them for

“Insects swift and free,
Like golden boats in a sunny sea—
Laden with light and odor that pass
Athwart the gleam of the living grass;”

but even the poet would here fail to do them justice; they have not the mere metallic lustre of the insect, but flash with light and color at once like winged gems. Type of the day-dreams that are here realized, the passion-flower bears not only blossom, but solid fruit, which leaves an exquisite taste behind it, and a desire for more. As though wearied with the exhibition of their own splendors, some of these flowers close both bud and blossom to the kisses of evening; and again there are others which sleep in the sunbeams, and make night glorious by their waking; the playfellow, for instance, which begins to open its huge flower as the sun declines, and scatters beneath the tropic moon the incense of its many-colored cup.

With such surroundings, and where every weed is an odorous flower, it is not necessary that our estancia should possess a garden; yet it does so, and it grows many a home flower, to remind the mistress of the mansion, not indeed of England, but of one who (herself an involuntary exile from her native land) in England had such plants, and kept them about her. Beyond the

garden and the orchard are woods of pink mimosa, of mango, and of cinnamon; or the eye, wearied with splendor, may rest upon groves of pines and cypress, under whose grateful shade the magnolia and the tender violet grow. Beyond and above all stand up, with their heads in cloud, the snowy shoulders of the Parima mountain chain.

In such a spot as we have vainly endeavored to paint with the faint hues of language, and in a dwelling suitable to the requirements of the climate, but of unusual size, and furnished with every luxury and convenience that wealth's far-reaching hand can supply, live Spencer Moatyn and Edith Ferrier, his wife. We still so call him, but he has long carried out his threat of abjuring that name, and is now known by another. That which he has thus taken in exchange is already held dear in Venezuela. His courage and activity, manifested in many an expedition on the savanna in pursuit of the fierce wild cattle, or in tracking the jaguar to his forest home, first gained him the respect of his new compatriots; and his geniality and kindness have since won their love. His wife, too, as gentle as she is fair, is a favorite with all. The Venezuelans, whose notions of government are so crude, and whose rulers have so seldom been masters even of themselves, have yet a very genuine love of their beautiful land; and that this rich young Englishman should have brought his bride to live among them, up in their native hills, was a circumstance grateful to them from the first. But they are now forever boasting of that glorious and health-giving air of theirs, which has transformed “the tress of the Day-star” (as, in their vague and flowery style, they are wont to term our Eady) from a fragile girl, trembling in life's balance, into a hale and active woman. Eady is not robust, but she can share the pleasures of a morning's ride along the sierra with her husband, and lives more out of doors than in.

As often happens where man and wife are exceptionally wealthy, Spencer and Edith are childless; but this is no drawback to the serene happiness which they enjoy, for they do not wish for children. They are exceedingly devoted to one another, and are always cheerful, though, to the gay, light-hearted folks about them, they seem (for such very young people) somewhat grave. Nothing is known of them beyond their visible wealth, and the fact that they came out to Venezuela accompanied only by a confidential attendant (an old or old-looking woman, since dead), and that they never hold any communication with England.

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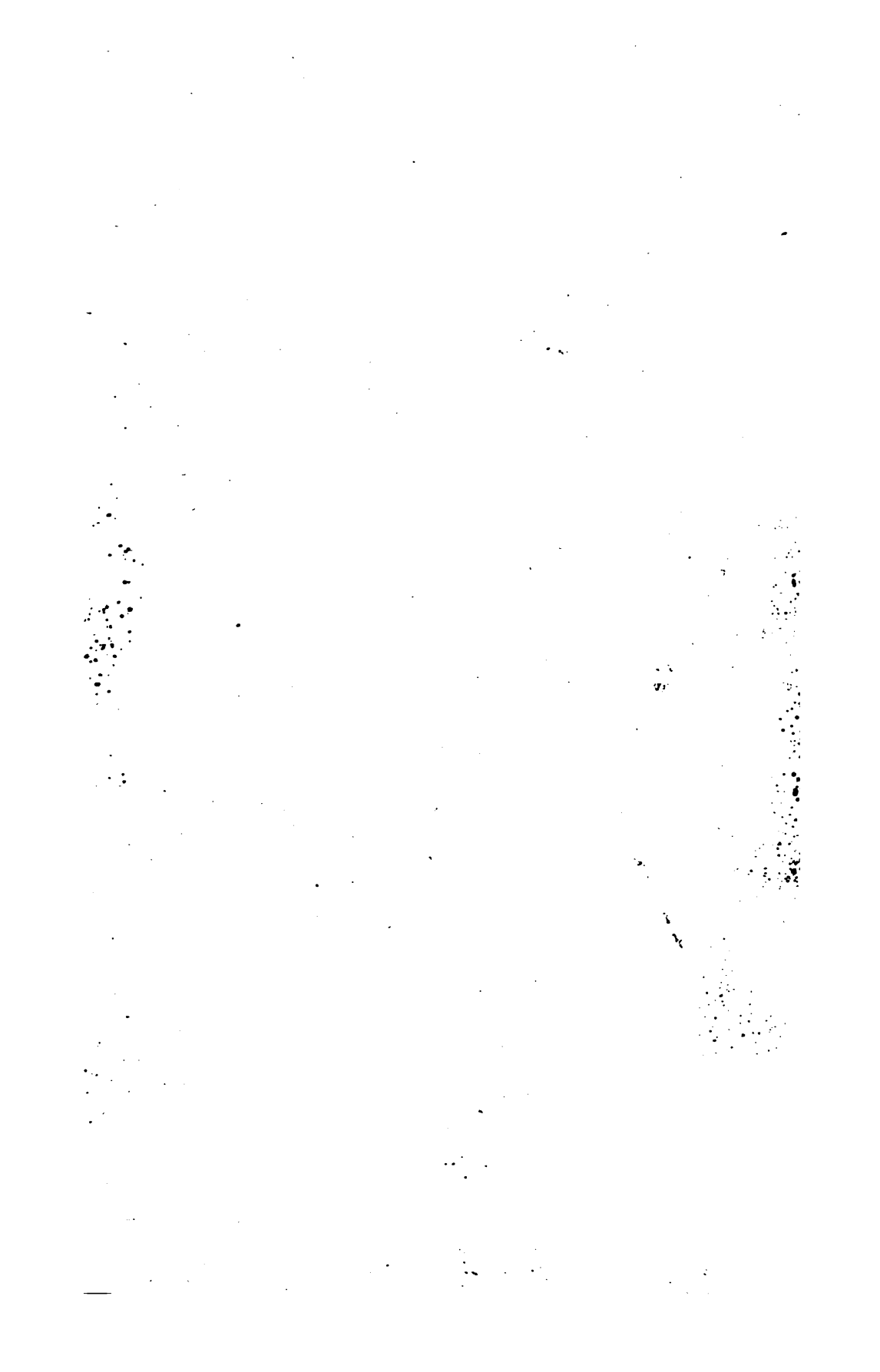
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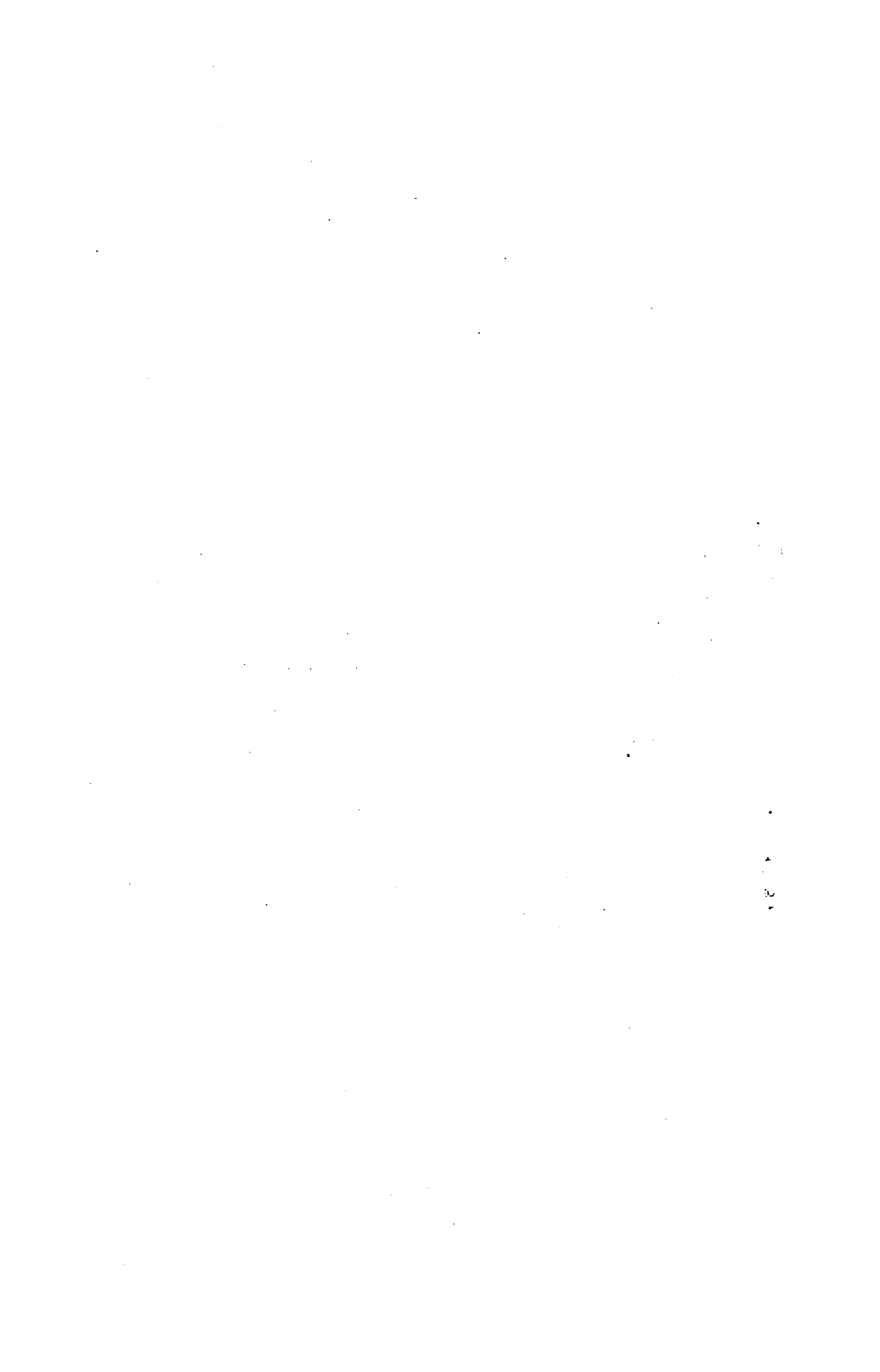
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